MIRIAM'S MEMOIRS.

A

SEQUEL TO "MONFORT HALL."

BEING

A ROMANCE OF THE HOUSE OF BEAUSEINCOURT.

BY MRS. CATHARINE A. WARFIELD.

AUTHOR OF

"THE HOUSEHOLD OF BOUVERIE,"

"MONFORT HALL," "SEA AND SHORE," "HESTER HOWARD'S TEMPTATION,"
"A DOUBLE WEDDING; OR, HOW SHE WAS WON," ETC.

"The curse of heaven lies upon our house,
'Tis dedicate to ruin. Even ME
My father's guilt drags with it to perdition.
My soul's benighted, I no longer can
Distinguish the right track. Mourn not for me:
My destiny will quickly be decided."

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MONFORT HALL.

SEA AND SHORE.

THE HOUSEHOLD OF BOUVERIE.

A DOUBLE WEDDING; or, How She was Won.

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"'The Household of Bouverie' is one of those books that pluck out all your teeth, an then dare you to bite them. Your interest is awakened at once in the first chapter, an you are whirled through in a lightning-express train that leaves you no opportunity look at the little details of wood, and lawn, and river. You notice two or three litt peculiarities of style—one or two 'bits' of painting—and then you pull on your seve leagued boots, and away you go."

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BOOK FIRST.

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"There's a dark spirit walking in our house,
And swiftly will the destiny close o'er us.
It drove me hither from my calm asylum—
And lo, the abyss! and thither am I moving,
I have no power within me but to move."

PICCOLOMINE.
Coleridge (*Translation of Schiller*).

"And lo! upon the murmuring waves
A glorious shape appearing,
A broad winged vessel through the shower
Of glimmering lustre steering,
As if the beauteous ship enjoyed
The beauty of the sea—
She lifteth up her stately head,
And saileth joyfully."

WILSON—ISLE OF PALMS.

"Seest thou yon gray gleaming hall
Where the deep elm shadows fall?
Voices that have left this earth
Long ago,
Still are murmuring round its hearth
Soft and low,
Ever there—yet one alone
Hath the gift to hear their tone."

MRS. HEMANS.

MIRIAM'S MEMOIRS.

BY MRS. C. A. WARFIELD.

AUTHOR OF "THE HOUSEHOLD OF BOUVERIE."

BOOK FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

IT was all very brief and bitter! I put back my hair from my forehead, and with interlocked fingers pressed tightly over throbbing eyeballs, threw myself back in my deep chair, and reflected—nay more, remembered.

It is a strange, mysterious process, that through which the will, scarcely conscious of an effort, commands long processions or rolling panoramas to be arrayed by the magician Memory before the sovereign soul, as passed the shadowy line of Duncan athwart the eyes of the destined monarch, at the behest of witches!

Conjury is nothing to this royal privilege common to all humanity which "curdles a long life into one hour."

Sitting thus and there, scarcely conscious of having touched any spring of the past by thought or inclination, it rose before me like a a solemn pageant.

Swiftly, briefly I swept the gamut of my life, as does the skilful performer ascending the instrument, with introverted fingers, yet was every note distinct to my ear and significant to my spirit.

From the time of my mother's death up to the present moment, all was comprehensive, clear. The faces of my dead father, my sweet, young stepmother, long at rest, were not less vivid to me than those of the living — of Mrs. Austin, Evelyn, Mabel, or of that brace of arch conspirators, the Bainerothes, father and son. I saw too, as if they stood

before me, those dear and distant friends, powerless to serve me in this emergency, George Gaston, his mother and sister, Captain and Norman Stanbury, and my lifelong friend and counseller, Dr. Pemberton. Nay, the cold, grave, reproving face of Mr. Lodore was not wanting in that strange masque of memory, that lightning flash of spirit. But the last scene presented by this mental mirage, that scene so recently enacted in the library, was of course the centre of the Catharine's wheel of fire, around which all the rest revolved.

Again I seemed to lie on the cushioned sofa, in the embrasure of the wide window, concealed by a sweeping curtain, as I had fallen asleep over that weary tragedy of Racine's, in the dim, rainy, August twilight; and again I seemed to hear the voices that had awakened me to sudden agony! The low, sad, bitter tones of Evelyn; the calm, clear, concentrated accents of Basil Bainerothe, as he urged his scheme of villainy and cruelty on his unwilling and yet, because constrained, unresisting accomplice.

Again I felt the cold dew break forth over my trembling frame as starting from my couch — that couch upon which I fell back in the next moment oppressed by deadly fear that held me cowering and spellbound, until they who in the eye of the law were my sovereigns had left the apartment — I heard the cruel verdict agreed upon between them that must have consigned me to a living tomb.

Instinct had restrained my steps to the precincts of that dim and distant library, until I felt that I should be safe from rencounter in hall or on stairway in seeking my own chamber, whither I had fled at last, to bar and bolt the door behind me, and cast myself down to revolve some plan of action, of escape. My mind had swept suddenly and powerfully across the regions of the past to reach the present. As an eagle drops swiftly down through clouds and sunshine to seek his nest, and there sits and broods for a season, I too must pause, must think, before I dared another flight; but as surely as the monarch bird puts forth his wings at morning, would I expand and try my newly aroused powers, as soon as dawn should break once more on my bewildered faculties.

One thing was indubitable; I must break through the sullen chains that had so long controlled me, and know freedom at last. I thought I knew that hour how Samson rent

his bonds. The sudden impulse that carries the slave to the swamp, after years of patient toil and bondage, possessed me. Every instinct of my nature was alive and athirst, and all pointed to one goal, one living draught. I would have liberty, or perish in the effort. All great resolutions mature suddenly, however distant and obscure may be their sources; and so I believe do all great individual resolutions. The dreamer suddenly unfolds his hands and rises to exertion. The drunkard, at night an object of scorn and derision, casts down the cup as he leaves the ale-house, and stands at morning on his own threshold redeemed and glorified. The libertine pauses, as if an angel had crossed his path, before some aspect of youth and beauty, and repudiates the impurity of his life. The thief restores, either through the confessional or openly and remorsefully, the plundered treasure. Are these revelations of conscience less truly wonderful than the divine grace of which preachers tell us, and which I verily believe falls like dew from heaven on many an arid heart? We cannot probe these mysteries nor find their roots, strive as we may; enough that they exist, and thus prove their own reality.

It has sometimes seemed to me that, in all instances, it is best to undertake what the soul impels us strongly to do, whether successful or unsuccessful. When I say "the soul," I feel that I shall be understood to mean that no sordid or craven impulse could be thus suggested, or emanate from such a source. All know, who have ever experienced these movements of the mind, how their surrender impoverishes all subsequent existence, and how the vanished "might have been" absorbs much after enjoyment.

Let the youth go forth to battle, or to sea; the maiden undertake her mission, whether real or imagined; whatever the result. Is there no joy in action, that success should be solely considered? Is result evermore to be held paramount to motive? I saw a caged mocking-bird once, long tame and docile, in whose breast the wild, latent instinct of freedom woke to life so suddenly, that it partook of frenzy, and in the unavailing effort to escape, it beat the best part of its life away against its prison bars, then moped and pined and gradually declined.

Better than this had been the chances of destruction by storm or starvation, or the talons of the hawk or eagle! Better failure and disaster as the meeds of human endeavor,

than gloom and discontent and sullen quiescent disappointment. Let us lead our true life, let the end be what it may. After all, the end here is but the beginning there. I felt, I reasoned thus.

I would go forth, betide what might, girded in the armor of my youth, my energy, my good intentions. Even if arrested in my flight, brought back to the scene of my suffering and humiliation, and compelled at last to submit to the stringency of circumstance, it should not be through fault of mine. I should have proved myself capable of endeavor, and in this thought should take a sort of bitter consolation. Hours passed on.

As yet I had digested no plan of action. I would go westward, I thought, but just as far away as my money would carry me, from these fiends, trusting to God for the rest, just as a boat pulls off from a blazing ship to strive for the shore, yet founders, perchance, in ocean. Of course I must adopt another name — what should it be? I should need clothing, and how secure, how convey away my wardrobe unseen by Evelyn? My diamonds, my only treasures, must be secreted or disposed of; how should this be done? Could I trust Mrs. Austin, Morton, Mabel even? No, the suggestion was discarded at once. The first were too old, too self-indulged and one of them too selfish (and in age people usually worship expediency above all else) either for generous counsel or couragous action; the other far too young, not to be necessarily indiscreet and impulsive. Indeed to have been otherwise at her tender years would have been simply monstrous! It was all right and natural. No, I must forego even the sweet satisfaction of saying farewell to Mabel; we must part, perhaps forever, as if we might meet again in an hour, and in all her after distress and anxiety must pass unshared, unheeded by any but her God.

There was no one else I cared very much about leaving, but the love of locality was a strong feature in my disposition, and every room in my father's house was dear to me, every book in his study, and every plant in our deep, green-shadowed garden. The very streets were sacred in my sight, that I had trodden from childhood. But my liberty was more precious to my heart than scenes of old association, and to gain one the other must be sacrificed. There was no hesitating now; I was on the treadmill of fate and must proceed or fall and be crushed beneath. And here

again I repeat what I have said so recently and with earnest conviction of its mysterious truth: on what slight pivots does our destiny often turn! Through what small channels doth Providence work its wondrous ways!

A pair of shoes had been sent home for me that day, which still lay on the table beside which I sat, wrapped and corded. In truth, they came very opportunely. "I shall want these soon," I thought as I examined the strong elastic bootees, which had been made for me in view of my morning walks — a part of dear Doctor Pemberton's regimen which I still strenuously and advantageously carried out.

As I was holding the shoes after examining them, the paper in which they had been enveloped rustled down on the floor by my side. I stooped languidly to pick it up merely from a sense of order, I suppose, and habitual tidiness, and as I lifted it, my eye fell upon a long column headed "Wanted," and almost for lack of resolution to withdraw it, wandered down its paragraphs step by step, musingly.

It was a democratic paper, such as was never patronized by Evelyn, herself a zealous conservative in politics, as our father had been before us; and as I cared little for newspaper reading, I had never suggested a subscription to any sheet that she did not fancy, although I inclined to democracy, in my very temperament. I was somewhat amused by the quaintness of some of the advertisements of this sheet for the people, that style of literature being new to me, and found myself smiling over the perfections set forth as necessary by the paragons of the earth in both wife and servant, when I came to a dead stand! Here was the very thing I should have selected, could I have chosen my own destination instead of depending on chance (as if indeed there were such a thing *possible* with God, the predestinator of the universe) or necessity (is the name a much better one as applied to the All-seeing Deity?) or fate (a more comprehensive, but not less abused term perhaps,) to do this work for me.

The advertisement ran thus, and quite fascinated me with its eccentricity, as well as suitableness to my condition.

"A gentleman and lady now sojourning for a short time at the Mansion House, wish to employ immediately, for the benefit of their children, an instructress, who must be, *im-*

primis, a lady and young; secondly, soundly constituted, and well educated; thirdly, a good reader, and able to teach elocution and entertain a parlor; fourthly, willing to reside on a Southern plantation; fifthly, content with a moderate modicum as salary. None other need apply. No references given or asked. Enquire for, "SOMNUS."

I laid down the paper and drew a long, free breath, then rang a peal of merriment, startling under the circumstances, but most refreshing to my weary spirit.

"What an oddity one or the other of these people must be," I thought, the man most probably; yes, I am sure it is he; no woman was ever so independent of references, or made youth and elocution a 'sine qua non.'"

"But am I soundly constituted? 'Ay, there's the rub." Suppose my terrible foe sees fit to interfere? 'Epilepsy,' as Evelyn called it, and perhaps with reason, God alone knows; what then? Well, I will hazard it, that is all. I will charge nothing for lost days and try to be zealous in the interval. Besides it is a long time since one of these "obliteration" spells occurred; for I shall ever believe Evelyn dosed me for her own purposes on that last occasion in the absence of Doctor Pemberton. Fiend! fiend! and yet my little sister *must* remain in such hands for a season.

I passed a restless night, employing the first part of it in quilting my diamonds into a belt which I placed about my waist, and the remainder in putting together as many useful, with a few handsome clothes, as my travelling trunk would contain. Bonnets and evening dresses, which require some room to dispose of, and the like vanities I abandoned to Evelyn's tender mercies. At dawn I slumbered. Yet I rose early as was my custom, and as usual, whenever the weather permitted, sallied forth before breakfast; but this time unaccompanied by my usual attendant, Charity, as for my daily walk.

"The Mansion House," was at no great distance from our own residence. The beautiful home of the Bingham family at that period converted into a hotel, like our own house, was situated in the ancient part of the city, from which fashion had gradually emerged and shrank away to found new streets and dwellings.

I rang at the private door and asked the porter solemnly

for "Somnus," sending up a card at the same time on which was written "Miriam Harz, applicant for the post of teacher." He smiled and nodded knowingly. A few moments later a grave, copper-colored servant, respectably clad and with an air of responsibility about him that was almost oppressive, invited me to follow him up the winding marble stair (so often trodden by the feet of Washington, and his Republican courts when a gracious assemblage filled the halls above in the time of its first occupants), and ushered me into a small, but lofty parlor at its summit, in which sat a gentleman reading the morning Journal—Somnus of course.

Very wide awake indeed seemed he who affected the title of the god of sleep, as he arose courteously from his chair, still holding his paper in one hand and waved me to a seat on the worn horse-hair sofa between the windows. He was a tall, thin, sallow gentleman of middle age, with a hooked nose and a certain air of distinction about him in contrast with his singular homeliness.

"Miss Harz?" he observed, interrogatively, glancing at the card on the mantel-shelf, near which he had been sitting over an unseasonable, smouldering coal fire.

I bowed affirmatively for all reply.

"And I," he said, "am Prosper Lavigne, of the 'Lessdurneer" settlement, (for thus he pronounced this anglicized French name) Maurice County, Georgia," with an air that seemed to say, "You have heard of me of course;" and again I bowed, as my only alternative.

"Lay off your bonnet if you please; I would like to see the shape of your head, before proceeding farther; mine, you see, is an ill-balanced affair," smiling quizzically, in his effort to be condescending, perhaps. "This is a mere business transaction," seeing that I hesitated to comply, "and your phrenological developments must atone for my deficiencies, or all will go wrong at once at Beauseincourt. But do as you like; now that you have thrown back your veil, I can see that the brow is a good one. That will suffice; I will take the moral qualities on trust for the present. Women as a class are moral." Then after a pause, "My wife is wholly occupied with her domestic and personal affairs you must understand. When we are at home much will devolve on you, that is if we suit one another, which is I fear dubious. Of course it requires two to make

a bargain. That reminds me, I have not heard the sound of your voice yet. I am much governed by intonation in my estimates of people, and usually form a perfect opinion of every one at first sight. Be so good as to let me hear you read," and he handed me the morning paper formally. "Be good enough to read this extract, for instance, aloud;" indicating it with his long, lithe fore-finger. "Observe, I am all attention."

It was a selection from one of Mr. Clay's last speeches. I did as he requested, without hesitation.

"People trot out horses and negroes when they wish to purchase; why not governesses?" I questioned humbly. "He did well to ask no references, his examination is thorough I perceive," I pursued mentally, and I laid the paper down, half amused, half provoked. When I had finished, he was gazing at me open-mouthed,—no unusual thing with him as I found later,—and was silent for a few moments.

"Splendid! admirable!" he exclaimed, suddenly; "both voice and elocution perfect! You possess the greatest of all accomplishments, Madam—next to conversational excellence. Allow me to congratulate you," rising to his feet and bowing low, then seating himself again in a deliberate way, all his own. "Music is a mockery compared to such reading! As well set a Jew's-harp against the winds of heaven! You understand my meaning, of course; it is not precisely that, however. Now let us converse a little;" and he waved his hand.

"The advertisement did not refer to this as an absolute condition I believe," I retorted, somewhat indignantly, flushing hotly as I spoke.

"I really cannot converse to order; I am a person of moods, and do not always feel like talking at all;" and I rose and prepared to draw down my veil, take up my parasol and depart in lofty dudgeon.

"I like you none the worse for a proper exhibition of spirit," he said, nodding kindly and settling himself once more to his paper composedly. "Sit still, Miss Harz—compose yourself by the time Madam Lavigne comes in, or she *may* think you high-tempered, and I am sure you are nothing of the kind,—only very properly proud. There, now, that is right; you seem to be a very sensible, well-conditioned young person indeed,—and I think you will suit; you are the tenth since yesterday morning," smiling

and bowing blandly, "and the only one that could read intelligibly. Elocution, you see, is my hobby. I forgot to say," looking up from his paper after a pause, "the salary is six hundred dollars a year for a lady of your merit — not enough, perhaps, but quite as much as we can afford to give. This I call a modicum."

"It is not very important," I remarked, "what I receive in the way of money, so that I am at no expense beyond my clothing and other personal outlays, and that I find myself well situated. My engagement in no case will extend beyond a year. You have your peculiarities, I see, and I have mine; the question is, might they not jar occasionally;"

"Oh, never, never! '*noblesse oblige*' you know," with a wave of the hand both lofty and urbane. "I hope I shall know how to treat a lady and a teacher, both in one, rare as the thing is to be sure, and a member of my household at the same time. Besides that, I shall have very little to do with you indeed, very little. Just now it is different. We are coming to terms. We have not made them, however, yet. I always save my wife this trouble, if possible. Ah! there she comes!" rising and rubbing his hands, "now all shall be arranged."

A mild, ladylike looking woman emerged from an adjoining chamber as he was speaking. She was somewhat elaborately dressed for that early hour, and was followed by a stream of pale, pretty little girls.

"Madame Lavigne," he said, bowing ceremoniously, "permit me to introduce to you Miss Miriam Harz," hesitating a moment and reading the name slowly from the card once more, as if to reassure himself. A candidate again, for the position of instructress at Beauseincourt. Say how do you like her looks?" firing off this last question with startling abruptness.

I had come to the conclusion by this time that Mr. Lavigne was decidedly as eccentric as his advertisement, and that his vagaries and personalities were not worth minding or estimating in the consideration in question. So when Madame Lavigne replied to his sudden question, "Oh, very, very much indeed!" and held out her kind hand to me, I took it without misgiving, and the first glance we interchanged contained freemasonry, and the first smile affection.

From that time forth Prosper Lavigne fell gracefully back

into his proper position, and I talked away fluently enough with his "lady," as he sometimes in the presence of strangers pompously called his wife. In short at the end of an hour it was settled that I was to join them the same evening at their hotel, and proceed with them thence to New York, there to take the packet for Savannah, their first destination, on the same night. Their plantation, they informed me, was more than a day's journey by carriage conveyance, beyond that city, but eligibly situated for health, though not for productiveness, among a low range of hills known as the "Lesdernier" mountains, the name being anglicized into "Lesdur*neer*," with the accent on the last syllable, so as to metamorphose it completely to the ear, instead of translating it to the sense.

"It is a very lonesome place, though, Miss Harz, in the winter season especially; mamma ought to tell you that," whispered Marion, the eldest daughter, as she nestled so closely to me and looked so kindly in my face, that the intruding thought of her unwillingness for my society was instantly banished. "In the summer it is pleasant enough, to be sure, so many people come to their cottages in the hills; but during eight months of the year we have but one near neighbor, and not a very social one either."

"From circumstances alone unsocial, Marion," said Madame Lavigne, flushing slightly. Her usual complexion was of a fair sallowness, common to Southern ladies. "Cousin Celia is certainly devoted at heart to every one of us, but she cannot, you know, leave home often."

"Oh! I know, mamma! I only meant to keep Miss Harz from being disappointed."

"Miss Harz has internal resources, I have no doubt," rejoined Madame Lavigne; "and even if she had not I fear her duties would preclude much longing for excitement. It is a very onerous task you are undertaking, my dear young lady, certainly," turning to me. "Five ignorant little Southern girls, well disposed, but imperfectly trained, will fill your hands to positive overflowing, I fear. You will find me, too, exacting sometimes. I am sure I shall enjoy your society whenever you choose to bestow it on me, and Colonel Lavigne as well"

To which declaration on the part of his wife, that gentleman responded by laying his hand upon his breast complacently, and bowing profoundly, without rising from his

chair or lifting his eyes from his paper, ending the ceremony by a flourish of his delicate cambric handkerchief and the exhibition at the same time of a slender, sickly, peculiarly shaped hand, decorated with an onyx seal ring, whereon I later detected an engraved vine leaf. He looked the gentleman, however, unmistakably plain and peculiar as his personal appearance was, and pompous and pretentious as so far seemed his manner.

If words could do the work of the photograph, I should like to show him to my reader as he appeared to me on that first interview, though later his whole aspect underwent a change in my sight, reflected from the cavernous depths within, so that what seemed somewhat ludicrous in the beginning, came to be solemnly serious, and even sophistically tragical and direfully awful from association of ideas on later acquaintance.

We have all, more or less, witnessed this phenomenon of transformation in some familiar aspect, either through love or hatred, respect or contempt, or admiration, until we find ourselves marvelling at past impressions received, in ignorance of the truth, in the commencement of our observations, and the very features undergo a change. I remember that Mr. Lavigne struck me on that occasion as a superficial man in every way, but kindly, courteous and vivacious, though certainly eccentric and somewhat absurd. One would have supposed him even a flippant, whimsical person, seen casually, but on later examination the droop of his eyelids and underlip, and the depressed corners of his mouth, gave to the close observer a surer indication of his melancholy character. The shape of his narrow, conical, and somewhat elegantly placed head, denoted an inclination to fanaticism which had been skilfully combated by a perfectly sceptical education, so as to turn this stream of character into strange channels. Hobbeyism was his infirmity, perhaps, and he was essentially a man of one idea at a time.

The word "odd," applied to him peculiarly, which is in itself a social ostracism when attached to any one, and raises a barrier at once between a man and his fellow bipeds, that not even superiority could surpass. He was emphatically a tawny man as to coloring — hair, skin and eyes, being pretty much of the hue of the "ribbed sea-sand;" yet there were vestiges about him of an originally fair com-

plexion. His wrists and temples and the summit of his brow were white as those of a women; his face was long, lank, and cadaverous; his eyes shone with a clear, amber and steady light, and wore usually an abstacted expression. They were subject on occasions to a peculiar warp of the pupils, however, which I have perceived in no other orbs. His hair was singularly shaggy and picturesque in its tawny grayness and wavy, wiry length; and above his eyes, his heavy brows, of the same texture and color, seemed to make a pent-house, from which the high, pale, homely brow receded gradually. His profile was aquiline to absolute grotesqueness. The idea of Punchinello presented itself irresistibly at the sight of his parrot-like nose and suddenly upturned chin, short and cleft. His gait was as peculiar as his countenance and manner. He glided in walking, carrying himself erectly with his arms pinned closely to his sides. He was altogether so extraordinary looking, that I felt myself staring almost rudely at him on our first interview. Yet his dress was in no way remarkable except for an air of old-fashioned and speckless neatness. Don Quixote might have resembled him had he been modernized.

Madam Lavigne, was a pretty and well preserved woman of about thirty-five, a fair brunette with traces of beauty, to whom most of her daughters bore a close resemblance. One alone, the plainest of the band, presented a modified resemblance of "Colonel Lavigne," as his wife called him, with scrupulous punctilio, "Count Prosper," as she told me his neighbors dubbed him. One son, the eldest of their family, they spoke of as the pride of their hearts, even on that first interview. He was in the Navy they told me, and consequently much from home. They regretted this for many reasons, and among others on my account. He was so genial, so companionable, their own dear Walter — "Such a delightful fellow," as his sister Madge declared, exultingly — the second of this band of sisters, and, as far as I could observe on first acquaintance, the brightest. Marion, the elder, was extremely pretty and gentle, and Bertie, the third, taciturn and unprepossessing, yet evidently sensible. She it was who alone resembled her father.

Fortunately for the uninterrupted success of my scheme, Evelyn had one of her "sick turns" that day, and remained closely shut up in her room. At one o'clock, I summoned Franklin to my chamber.

"There is a trunk" I said, "that I wish you to take to the Mansion House, directed to the care of a 'Mr. Somnus' lodging there. Here is the card attached with his direction. Place it with his baggage. It is to go to New-York, for a Miss Harz, a teacher, I believe, who has applied to me for assistance. But he understands all that, so you need not be at any trouble to explain. Be quiet, Franklin, in removing it, as Evelyn is very nervous to-day, and dislikes noise; and go with the drayman yourself to insure its safe delivery."

So passed my first lesson in deception; but I schooled lip and eye to obedience, so that Franklin suspected nothing, and being a discreet servant, who never let his right hand know what his left was doing, especially when gold was deposited in one or the other palm, I was sure of silence on the subject, at least until after my own departure.

Mabel and I dined tête-à-tête together at two o'clock that day. I had caused dinner to be served earlier than usual for my own convenience in Evelyn's illness, though, indeed, I found it a mere form to sit at the table. How could I swallow a morsel of food, choked as I was with grief, while the fair child I worshipped sat so calmly and unconsciously in my sight?

After dinner I sought Mrs. Austin, leading Mabel by the hand. I had been kissing her almost wildly every foot of the way up stairs, and she gazed on me, I could not help perceiving, with a sort of fond surprise; for it was not my habit to lavish such passionate caresses even on her, without occasion.

"I am obliged to go out now," I said, in a broken voice, which I vainly tried to command. "Take our darling Mrs. Austin, and keep her very safely until I come again. Promise me this," I added, eagerly seizing her hand, "never lose sight of her for an hour."

"La! Miss Miriam, what's the use of promising for one afternoon, when I have taken the best of care of her all of her life? You act so singularly to-day, added she," pettishly, and she began to smooth Mabel's hair grumblingly. Yet there was comfort in this suggestion of the past. I turned away without another word, murmuring blessings in my heart. There was no time to be lost now.

"I was so afraid you had rued your promise, and were not coming," said Marion springing forth from the doorway eagerly to greet me.

"And we had forgotten to ask your address," added Madam Laivgne, or we might have called for you, and saved you a long walk perhaps."

"We should not have carried off your trunk, even if you had not appeared, Miss Harz," said Colonel Lavigne, blandly. "There it is, you see, distinctly labelled, on the baggage wagon in front,—directed to the care of "Mr. Somnus, heh? A good deal of waggery about you, I perceive, or had you forgotten my name and address; Prosper Lavigne, of Beauseincourt?"

"No, no, I had reasons. But remember, no questions were to be asked; you must wait for voluntary communications;" and I laughed to hide my emotion.

"I am so glad—so glad, you are going with us," said little Louey Lavigne, pressing my hand, as she sat before me in the carriage by Aunt Felicité.

Colonel Lavigne and three of his daughters had been consigned to another hack, Louey and her sable attendant, stately with her large gold ear-rings and brilliant cotton head-handkerchief, being inseparable accompaniments of his wife.

"I have banished Colonel Lavigne, I fear," I said, in a broken voice. "It would have been best for me to have gone with the young ladies, perhaps. Let me not separate you from your husband, Madam."

"No, it is much best as it is," she answered, affectionately. "Think of yourself just now, and take no charge until we get home. You are our guest, until then, remember. I know it is a sad trial, to go with strangers, but you will find us reliable I hope;" and she clasped my hand in hers and so held it until we reached the wharf.

Tears rained down my face, beneath the friendly shelter of my veil; but Madam Lavigne, with the tact of good-breeding, affected not to remark them. Once little Louey, a child of eight years old, the youngest and prettiest of all, leaned forward as if to soothe or question me, or peep beneath my veil, but she was plucked quickly and resolutely back into her place, by the decorous Aunt Felicité, who had not lived so long with quality, without acquiring some delicacy of perception and behavior.

I had commanded myself before the carriage stopped beside the panting steamboat, and soon we were gliding along the placid river, towards the point whence the rail-

road was to carry us to our goal. At New York we found ourselves hurried for time to reach the packet Magnolia, and went directly from the depot to the quay, for embarkation. By the pilot, who left us at the Narrows, I sent back a few lines to Mabel, enjoining upon him with the gift of a piece of gold, to mail my letter on the following day, and receiving his promise to do so,—one that I learned later had been complied with. Yet Mabel never saw this dispatch. In this brief communication I promised my dear child that we should meet at my majority. And enjoined her to patience.

"You will hear from me again before long," I said, in conclusion, "and I will try and arrange some plan of correspondence. Evil people have obliged me to this step. Do not forget me, my darling, nor my lessons and counsel, and believe ever in the honor and devotion of your sister,

MIRIAM.

"Pray for me, Mabel."

My letter to Evelyn, without date, written on the ship and sent back by a returning passenger to be mailed also at New York as a separate venture, revealed my acquaintance with a portion of her duplicity and Mr. Basil Bainerothe's evil design. Knowing her superstitious nature, I promised her my forgiveness instead of malediction, on two conditions alone. One of these was that she should not seek to trace me, since all effort to regain me would be fruitless — another that she would be kind to Mabel and to my father's ancient servants until my return ; and of these last, especially to old Morton. That I would come again I promised her.

I uttered no threats nor reproaches, asked no favors beyond those which I had a right to demand at her hands as my father's ward, (long supported by him and ever cherished with paternal tenderness,) and of the guardian of his child. I knew that the use of my house and furniture would amply compensate her for all Mabel's expenses, among the principal of which would be that liberal education which I demanded for her as her right. I was very nearly twenty now, Mabel ten. There was still time to redeem the past and carry out all my frustrated intentions after the expiration of one year of abeyance.

Yes, I would "stand and wait."

CHAPTER II.

AFTER the alternate anguish and blankness of the last three months of my life, there was something peculiarly soothing and delightful to me in our short and serene voyage. I was not troubled with the slightest sensation of sea-sickness, from which Madame Lavigne suffered, almost superstitiously, from the moment she was conscious of salt water, and far before its effects could have been supposed to have been actually recognized.

She was consigned by her own request to the care of her husband and attendants, while I sat on deck encircled by my new pupils, trying to draw out the character of each in turn, in anticipation of my approaching duties, and smiling most often at the quaint remarks of the third daughter, Bertie, thrown in as these were from time to time, as a boy might stand in a fence corner and pitch a pebble occasionally into a group of peaceful fowls, each one of telling effect.

It was a relief to me, however, to find myself face to face with this wondrous new aspect of nature, sometimes alone, when after the fashion of the young, my companions would withdraw simultaneously, or follow each other speedily in pursuit of some fresh object of interest or curiosity and leave me to unrestrained thought and observation.

I enjoyed to the full, and as I believe none can enjoy nature but those who have keenly suffered, all the sweet, healing influences breathing about me. The line of Wordsworth's rose to my lips and I murmured it, softly, conscious that my own allegiance had been a faithful one.

> "For Nature never doth betray
> The heart that loves her."

"She repays me now," I thought, "the universal mother," as my heart rose rapturously to meet the soft summer breezes, whispering of "India and the spice islands," and the sound of the murmuring waves, washing the vessel's side broke on my ear. All things interested and delighted me, inexpressibly, in this new phase of life.

The flight of the stormy petrel, tireless like that of the human soul, and its inexplicable tameness, bringing to mind the "Albatross" of the Ancient Mariner," the sight of the porpoise, trembling in the moonlight, (that clumsy gymnast of the ocean) breaking into dark fragments the solid silver sheen, as it appeared to the eye, about him; the nautilus, so fearlessly riding the billow's crest, with its fairy rose-colored sails, that it seemed spirit-guided on a path that endangers the stoutest argosy; the rainbow dolphin, glittering just beneath the water, as if some queen of the sea, like Cleopatra in her barge, wearing attire of gold and purple, were approaching to pay us homage, or to exact tribute; and last, not least, in fact or fancy, the huge and distant whale, rising to the surface to blow and spout, and calling to the mind accounts we read of sudden volcanic islands thrown up from the bosom of the "vasty deep," from which lava fountains spring perennially. All these things surprised and enchanted me, as though unheard of before, and by such realities my imagination was stirred to its depths. This was just the medicine my nature demanded at this time and I quaffed the healing draught eagerly.

It was pleasant, too, to see the greeting ships go by, each with its light sails set, its pennons flying, its painted sides and fantastic figure-head, its peopled decks, and to hear the hoarse friendly bray of the conversational trumpets; pleasant to behold the groups on our own deck, and to know that we were all bound together by one great transient brotherhood of common destination and of risk and hope.

Then the approach to those Southern shores, where a new growth and different aspect of civilization met the eye at every glance and step, was almost like the feeling a disembodied spirit might have (methought) when first introduced to another planet. Everything was very vivid to me, very delicious — all the more so, perhaps, from my recent escape from captivity. But I said little of these sensations to those who looked upon our transition as an affair, of course,— too young or too old, perhaps as these were to feel these things as I did, or too matter of fact! I guarded my emotions jealously, fearing, like Charles Lamb, more than *none* at all, imperfect sympathy.

Near the mouth of the Savannah river a huge cypress log floated out to meet us, I remember, wreathed with a para-

sitical vine — so recent was its severance from the parent trunk — that still uplifted great clusters of scarlet berries above the water,— drifting out to sea to perish, like some brilliant human hope, too rashly ventured. I thought I could comprehend for the first time what the feelings of Columbus must have been under similar circumstances. It seemed an out-stretched hand of greeting from the genius of this strange land — Nature's own welcome.

As we neared the first fort, Polaski, I heard a clear voice beside me say, in cheerful tones, "The Savannah river is like a lady of fashion — she wears a brooch and a buckle. This is the first — this fort I mean,— but the real strength lies nearer at home, nearer her heart. Fort Jackson is our buckle or buckler, you know."

"What a quaint idea; where did you get it Bertie? for so they call you I find. By the by, what is your unabbreviated name my, love?"

"Robertina, after some ancestress I suppose. You know we are not people of yesterday."

"So I have heard already. But I should have known this without information!"

She seemed well pleased.

"And you, what blood is yours?" she questioned, abruptly.

"English," I replied.

"I should not have judged so,— Spanish or Italian rather! — You are fair, a kind of moonlight face, fair, yet dark — not ruddy, like most of your country people; that I have seen."

"It is true. Just now I am unusually pale."

"Pale people are so self-contained, so stern; I have always remarked it. I am a little afraid of them," she added with a side-long glance of the eye.

"But you will not fear me, Bertie, when you know me better, though I shall try to claim your respect, which is of more worth."

"You have it already. There is something very respectable about you."

"Thank you, Bertie."

"Oh, I mean, I mean," catching the faint derision of my tone, "something to be respected, — estimable — dignified — venerable — there now, will that suit you?" laughing archly and showing beautiful teeth, which rarely revealed,

flashed like a sword, from her otherwise plain little face. "You are so very aged you know," and she shook my arm slightly.

"And you, Bertie, are a strange mixture of youth and age, I take it. But I feel confident that we shall be fast friends."

"There is no telling. To be frank, I have no fancy for Yankees;" and with this careless and not over courteous rejoinder, she bounded off to look at a nautilus that a sailor had just caught in a bucket for her inspection and at her particular request. Over this she hung delighted.

Glimpses like these sometimes let the weather-wise observer very far down into character. She interested me from the time of this brief, impatient, yet suggestive conversation.

Scarcely twenty miles from the ocean, lies the city, almost buried in its deep, umbrageous shadows. Rice fields and planters' houses smile on either side of the river, through which glides on the swan-like ship to its destined harbor.

The Spanish dagger and the palmetto, the Cherokee rose and the old field-pine, are the principal features of the flat, monotonous landscape, made oriental by the presence of troops of slaves, arrayed chiefly in a plantation livery, blue, or brown and white, and wearing the universal kerchief on the head, even when hats are added to ward off the rays of the burning August sun.

It was sunset when our ship cast anchor in the harbor of Savannah. A few minutes later we had turned our backs upon its hospitable hull and were driving rapidly in the direction of the suburban residence of General Curzon. Under his kindly roof went by a few happy, peaceful days. Then again we found ourselves "en route" for the remote plantation of Colonel Lavigne; an estate situated in the skirt of the first range of hills that meets the traveller after leaving the sea-coast and the flat, fertile lands of Georgia.

The coach and wagon of Colonel Lavigne awaited him and his family when he reached Savannah; the first, a much abused, yet still strong and spacious carriage, in which four portly persons could find ample accommodation; the last, a long-bodied, high-swung affair, covered with black oil cloth, with pendulous curtains of the same material flapping loosely about, like the ears of an elephant in fly-time. The small glass circular eye-holes inserted in each of these curtains,

and the quaint shape of the vehicle itself, gave it a resemblance to one of the many-eyed fantastic insects, (as seen through a magnifying glass,) with which summer delights to vary her aspect and tantalize optimists.

It possessed a slanting repository behind, I remember, also covered with a loose oil-cloth curtain, for the reception and protection of baggage, which served to confirm this quaint resemblance. This vehicle was called by the negroes the "lumberbus," a corruption of its original term, no doubt, and was dragged along — literally dragged like its progenitors — by four strong gray mules, of which Uncle Quimbo had the honor to be the driver.

All this I learned while pleading for my delicate trunk — a high place in that tabernacle devoted to the more substantial luggage of the Lavignes.

"You see, Missy," said Uncle Quimbo to me (an old white-haired, yellow-toothed, bandy-legged, and jet black, as well as hideously ugly servitor,) as he described the uses of his own particular conveyance with animated voice and gestures, "you see, Missy, we brings our surplies in dis here lumberbus from Mauriesville, (dats our county town, honey!) w'en-so-ever we gets out of sich matters, an' we has to pertect 'em superciliously from de wedder; sugars, and dem meltin' sort o' things I means; but de principle part ob' our surplies goes up home on de cotton wains from Savannah, wen de crops done been sont down to de brokers!

"I tell you what, Missy," he continued, "you is cum to de land of plenty for vittles ob de fust quality. My mistiss hab de bes' going on her table, and der aint not no close-fisted doings at Bosincore! We black 'uns has our coffee, an' tea, an' sugar, an' wheaten flour of Sundays, an' a plenty to eat eb'ry day; an' as to 'bacca, heigh, chile! dere aint no master in dese settlements like ourn, for heavin' out plugs to his hans'; an' half dollars too, *wen he has 'em*," he added 'sotto voce,' after a pause, with a little shake of the head; "but dat aint always chile! Money is scarce wid Masta, an' he owes a heap dese days. Has you a quarter to spare, my pretty little Buckra Missy, for de poor ole man?"

He stood humby before me, with his hat in his hand, his white head bent expectantly while I felt for the coin in my pocket, (happily finding it after a diligent search,) and plucking at his wool as he received it, he turned silently away.

The few cautious or incautious words of the old negro (it was hard to determine which) let in a flood of light on the true condition of things at Beauseincourt. But I had yet to learn how deeply the pressure of debt is felt by attached slaves, whose interests are identical with those of their masters, and how inevitably such a state of things exists where the product of the soil is disproportioned to the wants of the proprietor and to those of his workers, unless stern privation be the law of action. "Masta owes a heap;" these words returned to me often very vividly afterwards, when opportunity for observation was afforded me; and I learned through them involuntarily what skeleton was contained in the closet at Beauseincourt.

It was decided that Colonel Lavigne and four of his daughters, the melancholy Jura, and Sylphy, the handmaiden who had come down to meet her mistress and assist in the cares of transportation, should take passage in the "lumberbus," along with the trunks, bags, baskets and boxes, a load that taxed the strength of the splendid team of mules to their utmost.

Madame Lavigne and myself, her nurse Felicité and youngest child Louey, as on a former occasion, occupied the carriage, driven by a pompous-looking mulatto man, who might have passed current at a fancy ball as the "Marquis of Marmalade," so showy was his person, so gaudy his attire, so inflated and absurd his bearing. He was the glass of fashion in the Lesdernier settlement, I was informed by his mild mistress, and the air with which he arranged his tall, shabby hat, with its tarnished gold band, to one side, and drew on his tattered lemon-colored gloves, and handled his rusty reins, was a proof that he shared this opinion. I found him irresistible in his way, and from that time forth met with frequent food for amusement in the contemplation of "King," "Masta's" pet and page.

Our first day's journey found us dining at the house of one relative of Colonel Lavigne's and sleeping at that of another. Our second led through a far more wild and lonely region than we had yet traversed, though still here and there on either side of the road might be seen fields covered with the staple of the country, the monarch plant, just beginning to boll and to hang forth as a signal of its royal maturity, its white, flossy banner to the summer winds.

At times the roads were bordered for some distance with China trees, still in their summer pride of leaf and berry, and their stately shadows fell refreshingly above us, weary as we became of the eternal noonday glare and the shimmering heat.

We dined that day from the contents of baskets packed already with edibles, brought from Savannah — dined "al Fresco" by the side of a gurgling brook that burst out from the very roots, as it seemed, of a magnificent tulip tree, umbrageous and far-reaching as the tent of Xerxes himself, and glorious above any parallel in pride of blossom.

No picnic was ever more successful, for the day was divine, to begin with, — hot but breezy, — an Oriental day, such as inspired the poet Mirzah or the writers of the Arabian Nights. A day wherein soul and body seem fused, so to speak, in one dream of sensuous enjoyment, one involuntary celebration of Persian rites.

The servants withdrawing later to a clump of cottonwood, did honor to what their masters had left of the repast, and divided the heel-taps of Champagne bottles with that impartial justice known all over the world where men and women are the opposing candidates for a partition of goods. It was supposed from the slightly unsteady condition of King during the afternoon that succeeded this collation, that he had in some way enforced a monopoly.

I remember how suddenly, soon after partaking of this refreshing luncheon, we plunged into a deep forest, following a devious path, rather than road among the thick and matted undergrowth, and gazing through the gloom upwards to the lofty branches of poplar, and walnuts and sycamore trees, matted together by serpentine vines that screened the earth below from every glimpse of sunlight. Here all was eternal shadow and grayness, silence profound and deathlike, save when a paroquet screamed suddenly above our heads, startled from its security, or a mocking bird, as if in welcome, burst out into a full, rich, exulting carol, like a strain of sweet, musical, rollicking laughter.

Hearing this for the first time, I could not help in turn breaking out with the beautiful lines of Wordsworth, which by the substitution of one word, seemed intended for the occasion, or singularly appropriate to it. What proves a poet's power so well as such an impulse? such an adaptation? It was his address to the nightingale that inspired me now.

"Oh, *mocking-bird*, thou surely art
A creature of a fiery heart;
Those notes of thine, they pierce and pierce
Tumultuous harmony and fierce;
Thou sing'st as if the god of wine
Had helped thee to a valentine,
A song in mockery and despite
Of shades, and dews, and silent night."

"Who would have thought that dear old, staid Wordsworth could ever have written anything half so spirited," said Madame Lavigne, quaintly enough, when I had replied to her question by naming the author of these lines.

"Do teach me that pretty posey," entreated little Louey; which I did on the spot, and without much difficulty, the words having seized on the little creature's sensitive ear; a gift which saves more than half the effort of the teacher where children are required to commit poetry to memory.

It was in the evening of our second day's journey, that we gained the confines of the estate of "Beauseincourt," after ascending a gradual slope of miles. The massive gate of entrance was unclosed with some difficulty, and not without delay, evidently vexatious to the master. We found ourselves, after passing through its iron leaves, winding along a narrow and weed-grown road for more than a mile beneath the dense overhanging branches of the stately forest trees that completely shadowed this portion of the domain; a road that widened and cleared, however, as it swept finally to a circle before the mansion. It loomed up before us suddenly from impending shadows, that home of the Lavignes — theirs for more than a century, which is with us the lifetime of a nation. Gray and gaunt, lofty and neglected-looking, yet singularly picturesque, it met our gaze; its steep slate roof, pointed in many gables, enlivened with dormer windows, which glistened, as if composed of stained glass, in the light of the setting sun; a light which reached no farther down, for shadows deep, broad, and perhaps ominous, brooded forevermore at the base of the house of Beauseincourt.

The front was plain to monotony, relieved only by the small out-jutting balconies of stone, each surrounded by a marble balustrading, (and supporting a gigantic and sometimes ruinous urn of the same material), on every one of which a long, narrow casement opened from the room within, thus securing a sort of out-doors privacy to the occupants of the several apartments.

The house had been scrupulously modelled after the Chateau in Dauphiny, from which the family of Prosper Lavigne, the builder and first *American* progenitor of the present occupant, had been expelled by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, so fatal to the hopes of the Huguenots.

The difficulty of obtaining stone for the whole edifice had caused him to compromise with stucco over brick (the soft, ill baked, yellowish brick of that country); and as this outer coating had fallen away in patches here and there, yielding to the dampness of the climate, the true material below glared forth like a Gipsy's tawny skin beneath his tattered gray gaberdine. The only reasonable hope of uniformity now seemed to be that the stucco coat might peal off or crumble away altogether, and the house thus be left in its primitive nakedness, like an Indian Chief arrayed for battle with his ochra on. The present effect was singularly forlorn and even grotesque.

A flight of broad stone steps, narrowing towards the summit, led to the high, quaint folding-door of entrance, which opened in turn on a large square hall tesselated in wood, whence sprang, to one side, a magnificent winding stair, inlaid in the same elaborate fashion. This graceful stairway, a feature so pleasing and characteristic, ever, in domestic architecture, led to and was surrounded by an upper gallery, (leaving a circular space open to the roof above,) on which the doors of the several chambers in this part of the building gave, so as to produce an almost Moorish lightness and elegance of effect.

The skylight itself, which had once poured softened radiance from its crystal circles on the lower stories, was now pretty nearly fastened up with substitutes of wood, so that three or four dull eyes of glass, crusted with dust, alone remained to glare sullenly on the scene below and bear reluctant witness of departed glory.

With the exception, however, of that dusty and dusky skylight, unapproachable by mop or broom, the house was kept with a rigid order and scrupulous neatness, which added to, rather than took away from, its details of frugality and decayed prosperity,— the last chiefly observable in furniture of quaint and ancient forms, preserved with the utmost care and economy, even to the darning in colored silks of the faded tapestry chair coverings, which it was the boast of their owners had never been replaced since the

time of the first Prosper Lavigne, the builder of Beauseincourt.

From the hall of entrance, doors opened on either hand into large square apartments, many windowed and lofty, severally used as state, drawing and dining-room. These saloons were scantily furnished, chiefly with high-backed, comfortless, and quaintly carved oaken chairs. Long, narrow mirrors set in frames of ebony, and beaufets of the same material, varied with a faint scattering of modern cabinet work, in strange contrast with the prevailing antique forms, completed their sparse adornments.

The floors were bare, and waxed to a slippery polish and mellow colour; and around these ran a deep and elaborate border of parquet work, or wood mosaic in black and buff, singularly elegant to my fancy.

A wide corridor, sweeping laterally across the house behind these two apartments, with windows at either end, gave access to a sitting-room and breakfast-room beyond, divided by a square central hall, like the large rooms in front, save that this entry contained no stairway, and was covered over head instead of being open to the roof. Here ended the original structure of Beauseincourt.

To this primitive dwelling however, a wealthy successor had added two ells, jutting out about half their width, beyond the breadth of the edifice, and running directly back, to a much greater extent, so as to enclose between them a narrow court-yard. These ells were bordered, like the rear of the house, with long, low galleries, which were also repeated above stairs — an infinite protection from sun and storm. This portion of the establishment was much less in height, however, than the original edifice; not only because the ceilings were lower, but owing to the existence of the additional story (the attic lit with Dormer windows) that crowned the principal structure.

In one of these unpretending ells, the longer one, was situated the large, low-roofed library, with its windows to the floor, opening on the surrounding galleries, and with its huge oaken book-cases, literally crammed with volumes, filling all spaces, save those of outlet. A side hall and stairway led to the rooms above it, the apartments appropriated to my use and that of the elder daughters of the house. These also, as I have intimated, opened on porticos, that possessed the advantage of strict privacy.

In the lesser ell,— for the house presented in the rear something the shape of the capital letter F, though without the central projection,— the pantries and offices of the house were situated, and above these were small chambers, reserved chiefly for the uses of single gentlemen. These bachelor apartments were also accessible by means of a separate stairway, a convenience not to be too highly appreciated where strangers are concerned.

In the centre of the court-yard, which was paved with slabs of soft stone, cracked in many places, and, notwithstanding all efforts to the contrary, frequently grass-grown, was an immense cistern, above which a square, windowless building with a four sided roof, was erected, raised on brick piles five or six feet above the ground, and alone accessible by means of rickety wooden steps. This was the plantation store-room, of which the master kept the key, which, in my simplicity of ignorance and credulity of southern horrors, I had at first believed, from the appearance of the massive lock and chain that secured its opening, to have served as a negro jail or place of punishment.

I was relieved to find myself in error; no place of this sort existed at Beauseincourt — no slave belonging there knew more than the theory of cruelty.

Beneath this frame edifice and around the ample cistern reserved for drinking water, and filled only with winter rains, were ranged a number of porous earthern jars, four or five feet in height, called evaporators, which, being enveloped with coarse cotton cloths, it was the duty of certain sable imps to keep constantly moistened, by means of a hose connected with the cistern pump.

Through the means of this contrivance, cool water, pure, and limpid, was to be had in summer and winter, by night or day, at Beauseincourt; aud to this systematic arrangement was attributable (at least so Colonel Lavigne fully believed) the good health of his household, which, in that region of miasma, was proverbial.

But that which more than all proved interesting to me about this singular Hygean temple, even if repulsive at the same time, was the presence of a monstrous bear, which chained to a post, kept up its unceasing peregrinations, like an unquiet spirit, over the damp brick pavement among the water jars, drinking as often as he listed, from one of them, which was left uncovered for the purpose, and roaring hor-

ribly at seasons. This creature was the pet of his owner, who called him "Mumbo Jumbo," and suffered from his Ursaship familiarities such as no mortal dog or man, would have dared to offer him.

Reared on his hind legs, and in this attitude a head and shoulders taller than his master, I have seen him a hundred times with his huge paws resting on the shoulders of Colonel Lavigne, while he gaped above him open-mouthed, his great tusk-like teeth exposed, his enormous red tongue dangling so as to touch the tawny hair beneath it. My blood ran cold on every repetition of this experiment, for such I felt it to be, in spite of its frequent success. "The beast has only to choose to give one snap" I thought, "and all will be over." What sane man could conscientiously so expose himself to unnecessary danger? And yet, is this the person to encounter a wild beast fearlessly, and slay him sword in hand, were the lives of his whole family at stake? That would be courage. This is sheer rashness and vanity, begetting an overweening confidence."

I found myself already engaged in the study of Colonel Prosper Lavigne — an uprofitable one as shall be seen; yet as he had promised me on our first acquaintance, we had "very little indeed to do with one another," which proved a relief to me, I confess. There were whole days during which he addressed to me not one word beyond the mere civilities consequent upon his position at the head of his table; times when he seemed to ignore my presence and existence altogether.

When not walking or riding over his estate, Colonel Lavigne passed much of his time alone in his library, a rare if not splendid one, and as his hours were regular, it was easy to avoid intrusion on his solitude, even while enjoying his books. To the perusal of these, inconsistent as they were in size, color, material, binding — truly a Falstaffian regiment of learning — all were welcomed in his own absence from their presence. He was devoted to his wife's society, and generally sat an hour or two of each day in her apartment, talking with her confidentially.

It was only in the evening that the family circle was complete, and this was chiefly passed in games, or readings of poetry, or Shakespeare's tragedies, especially of the last, of which he was almost passionately fond; inconsistently so, it seemed to my mind, other tastes considered.

I knew from the first that he intended to me no disrespect by his frequent silence and forgetfulness of my presence, since he treated his daughters very frequently in the same manner, when his fits of absence enveloped him. At times he was urbane, courteous, talkative, though usually tedious to me from his old-fashioned mannerism and eccentricity of expression; a man, however, with a vein of genius indisputably underlying much that was common-place and even disagreeable.

The child who resembled him most, was the one I have already spoken of as Bertie or Robertina; and yet to admit the resemblance seemed to be doing her injustice, plain as I thought her on earlier acquaintance. As I knew her better, her features acquired for me a strange interest and even beauty, denied to them on first inspection. Her nose and chin though firmly marked, were delicate; her face a pure oval, that rarest perfection; her skin of a fine clear sallowness, relieved at times by a flush that was very becoming; her tawny hair was fine in its texture, and picturesque in its waving, careless grace, and promised great luxuriance and even beauty; her opaline eyes were large and lucid, like her father's, without the occasional warp and quiver that distorted his pupils under any phase of excitement; and her brow was truly noble, as was the fine straight setting of her eyebrows, placed upon ridges that indicated the remarkable preëminence of her perceptive faculties. Yet withal, she could not with any justice have been called even pretty. Unformed and thin, she was at fourteen still a mere child in appearance, and in many respects essentially child-like. But her soul seemed a falcon that could be thrown off as freely from her body as the quarry from the wrist of the sportsman, and soar as wholly apart from common surroundings. This child stood alone in the family at gaze, as it were, at the sisterly couples on either hand, Marion and Madge, Laura and Louey, who were perfectly paired, both by age and congeniality.

Bertie, the one isolated figure in the group, was of a different temperament from any of the others; not half so lovely in temper or appearance, not as docile a student, yet above and beyond all the rest in feeling, and grace, and comprehension. Her habits were quaint and peculiar, and she was, so to speak, of a strangely precarious disposition, depending greatly on accident for her attainments and en-

joyments; nor could any one of those who knew her best at the time of my advent, form an idea of what, from one moment to the next, she might say or do, or when she would come or go, or what she would dislike or enjoy.

Of course these peculiarities were the points of attack in her case, and I lost no opportunity of placing before her a steadier purpose and a more consistent standard of behavior as guides for attainment, than had yet inspired her ambition; and though my teachings might have been more in precept than in practice, I had the satisfaction, before very long, of seeing her profit by them to some extent.

Just in proportion as I became a necessity of her being, did she draw more and more near to me; and to my own surprise, I found myself in the course of a few weeks, more deeply bound up in this homely child than in her far more fortunate and beautiful sisters.

At her own entreaty I permitted her to sleep in my chamber, which, by agreement, was to have been unshared; and this in itself was a near approach to intimacy. From her little couch in the corner, she would come to me in the dead of night, asking earnestly to know the cause of my piteous groans, and who *she* was on whom I called by the name of "Mabel," to find shelter in my arms. Then, as the tears rained down my face, she would press my brow and hold my hand in mute and unquestioning sympathy, such as none but young natures are susceptible of. Her curiosity, though repressed, was keen, however, but as yet I dared not gratify it; for I could feel no safety save in my disguise from the strong hand and cunning tongue of Basil Bainrothe.

The right to confront him again fearlessly must be mine before I could confide my secret to the keeping of strangers, however kind or discreet these might seem to be, and in the meantime my heart grieved and died within me from anxiety about my dear and distant one.

No safe channel of correspondence could as yet be pointed out, and, so far I had fixed upon no plan whereby to obtain information concerning her, without compromising my own safety. Not even to Mr. Lodore, our revered pastor, dared I confide my wrongs or my place of refuge; for I knew well of old his prejudice in favor of Evelyn and her religious observances, and against me and my careless devotional habits and Judaic lineage.

No one ever had so many acquaintances or so few friends as Miriam Montfort, and not alone from the bitter force of circumstances. This had been a point with Evelyn, and she had gained it by her manifold schemes and adroit wire-working. I recognized this now in my exile and desolation as I had never done before.

But a spirit was fast unfolding its wings in my own breast, that promised to lift me above the painful necessities of my condition. For the first time in my life I felt the importance of self to self. I would be strong, resolute, impassible. I would put down to quietness the rebellious elements of my nature, struggling strongly against circumstances. These would I take advantage of, as others had done before, and lay my hand on the crest of the billow rather than sink beneath it.

Day by day this resolution strengthened and struck root, and those who beheld me marvelled at the new power that breathed about me — at the firmer footstep, the clearer voice, the increased brilliancy of eye and smile, the more ringing and responsive laugh that evidenced its presence. I was learning to be independent at last, to live for the day alone, and at first the self-imposed lesson was a manifest success. We shall see how it prospered.

CHAPTER III.

TRUE to their quaint advertisement and to the gentleness of their breeding, my hosts asked no questions as to my antecedents, but I was convinced, notwithstanding her enforced silence, that Madame Lavigne was disappointed that I did not voluntarily lay my past life before her. As to Colonel Lavigne, I could not doubt the sincerity of his indifference, manifested as this was in every way short of discourtesy, or the simplicity with which Marion and Madge took everything for granted in my case and dispensed with explanations.

It was evident, however, to the least observant, that the

place I occupied before many weeks had passed, in the consideration and affection of the Mistress of Beauseincourt, was an enviable one, and her daughters were not slow in following her example, and according to me their confidence and friendship.

Why need I repeat that the capabilities of happiness that had long slumbered in my repressed heart, woke to life under these new influences of appreciation and respect, and that I felt at times as if I needed the restraining hand of Evelyn, or the baleful eye of Basil Bainrothe, to compel me back to humility.

"You praise me too much," I said, one day, to Madam Lavigne; "I have never been used to affectionate commendation like yours before; beware how you spoil your governess! I have been flattered, but never earnestly approved of until now; not, at least, since mamma and papa were taken from me," I faltered, still holding her honored hand in mine. Something quivered on her lips, that spoke out more intelligibly from her eyes, and to this unuttered remonstrance, I hastened to make answer,

"Not yet — not yet! Some day I will tell you everything. Until then, trust in and strengthen me. I know how strange you must think my continued reserve; this much believe, I pray you, that I have never done aught to make it necessary in the eyes of the just, or that I would be afraid or ashamed to tell you or any other honorable person; nothing that I should be ashamed my dead father and mother themselves should know; continue to me, then, those manifestations of your regard and friendship, that you have so far accorded me under mysterious circumstances, until the light shall dawn and the truth be apparent. I ask this humbly, for I stand alone, Madam Lavigne."

"Not *alone*, Miriam, while you continue to deserve my respect and that of my husband. He holds you in the highest esteem. It is not his custom to be demonstrative."

"No, no, I see that, and am glad that it is not. It would oppress me, I believe, to receive more courtesy than is extended to me. I should feel it undue to my merits, my position. I am a stranger still beneath your roof; but if I succeed —"

"Oh, you have succeeded," she interrupted, quickly. "The girls are already improving wonderfully, and are

much attached to you; yet you do not oppress them with lessons, which I am truly glad of. I have never seen them so happy before in their employment."

"I consider myself, somewhat in this arrangement, as well as my pupils," I rejoined. "The truth is, my nervous energy breaks down after a few hours of exertion, and I need relaxation. I should not be doing your children justice were I to instruct them one moment beyond this period. Teaching is a new thing to me, as a task, and I have had seizures of a very unpleasant character from over exertion before now, that I do not care to renew. The two hours of afternoon study, however, prepare them perfectly for the next morning, and they have their evenings for social recreation, which arrangement seems to me so important in a family situated like yours; you parents would otherwise be condemned to solitude."

"Yes, we find it much the best plan, and Colonel Lavigne is quite a new man in spirits, since we have formed an evening circle around him. Our dear old teacher (Major Favrand called him the Chinese Empire, because he declared that he and his subjects both stood still forever) was the veriest owl! He insisted on diligent night-study, and the children were scattered to their rooms with a lamp or candle apiece, directly after supper, and he himself droned at backgammon or tric-trac with Colonel Lavigne, until it came very near making both of them idiots. I was very much relieved when he concluded to accept a Professorship in the Macon Seminary, though he was an excellent man, and no trouble."

"Being a man," I rejoined, laughing, "Women, I know, are vastly more troublesome in strange houses, and I have been used—no matter though about that! I shall improve, I hope, through the valuable lessons of example I receive every day from your self-sacrificing spirit."

"My dear Miriam, you surprise me! Colonel Lavigne would smile at your estimate of me. It is my turn to remonstrate now about over praise. My good teacher and best of friends, Mr. Fairleigh, (you should see him, hear him preach Miriam, to form an idea of the so often misapplied word 'Apostolic') always thought me self-indulgent, and I have been conscious myself of this besetting sin; but I believe you are in earnest in what you say, only too appreciative."

"No, no, Colonel Lavigne and your daughters would bear me out, I doubt not in my opinion,—Colonel Lavigne who is certainly discriminating and dispassionate."

"And sweet-tempered as well," she added. "Now I, you know, am necessarily very cross, sometimes, with negroes and children—being only mortal, and a woman besides; but he is imperturbable! Don't you think him a very remarkable man, Miriam?" turning suddenly to me, with her whole face abeam!

It was truly wonderful how this quaint, dry, homely man, had managed to make for himself such a nest in the hearts of his household, and I hesitated for a reply, not wishing to offend.

"He is certainly peculiar," I answered, after a pause; I could not echo "remarkable," and I saw that she was disappointed.

"Eccentricity has always been, I believe, considered an evidence of genius," she observed, with a little asperity of manner, "but I forget, you know, you *can* know very little of Colonel Lavigne as yet; indeed may never know him."

"It is quite possible," I replied, sententiously.

"And desirable, your tone would seem to say," she rejoined quickly. "The truth is, you did not like his quizzing you on that first day; confess it, Miriam?"

She smiled in saying this.

"It is true, I prefer his serious vein," I answered; but in truth, dear Madame Lavigne, I have not the least complaint to make of your husband, he is a perfect gentleman I think, and admirably well informed."

"Oh, certainly, that has never been doubted. He made a great mistake in not becoming a politician, as his father wished him to become. The way was open for him once, and great influence would have been wielded in his behalf, but he fell into one of his fixed melancholy ways, and refused to be advised. Besides, in those days he had the prospect of immense wealth, and one of his favorite designs was to renovate and refurnish this old barbaric place, to which he is so devoted, and make it what it was meant to be in the beginning. But all this fell through, you know, when Armand Lavigne entailed his estate."

"To tell you the truth," she pursued, after a long sigh and a few moments' pause; "at one time I was very much afraid of the consequences of this disappointment on my

husband's mind. There is suicide in the family," she whispered, and she shuddered slightly, paling at the very thought. "But he rallied after a time, and bore it pretty well; and here we are ever since, fixtures in mediocrity, just able to keep our heads above water and exist."

Thus was Uncle Quimbo's suggestive hint verified at last! I could only murmur something significant of my regret; but she proceeded, unheeding my embarrassment.

"Now you see why it is, that I always prefer to see my husband gay, rather than grave, although I know it makes him appear a little fantastic sometimes to others. The least shadow on his face arouses all my fears, for I know how very much he has to vex and oppress him. A Southern planter walks on a treadmill, after he once takes on the harness of debt. To pause is to perish. Yes, Miss Harz, I will not conceal from you that my husband is fearfully embarrassed."

"Oh, my prophetic heart, my uncle," rose to my mind in derisive association with Quimbo's insight into the true state of affairs, in which his own welfare was so deeply implicated. "No wonder the old slave was sad," I reflected, "Poor Uncle Quimbo!"

"All we *can* do," she continued, in a monotonous way of meek complaint peculiar to her, "is to keep on as we are doing, strain our credit, and hope for a rise in cotton, putting off the evil day as long as possible, if we do not succeed in avoiding it altogether. Slaves must be fed and clothed, in common humanity, however unproductive their labor may prove. And as to getting rid of the surplus of mouths, as many do, we are not people of that sort! No Benoit or Lavigne either, ever yet sold negroes for bread. It would be a sort of cannibalism, that makes one sick to think of. We have the feudal feeling — our people are our retainers, and belong to the soil."

"I understand your idea, Madame Lavigne, "I said gravely, "but it seems to me under such circumstances it would be better to cut the Gordian knot at once, and break the tie that binds you to these vampyres. They are sucking your life's blood, and impoverishing you and yours, while they only delay their own fate by remaining together. Why not part with some of the worst of them that the rest may subsist; or give up this hermitage altogether, come out into the world and put shadows behind you?"

"The very suggestion would render Colonel Lavigne desperate, I fear. His peculiarities are not skin-deep, Miriam; would to heaven they were! But change is not possible to him;" and she shook her head.

"Ah, that is unfortunate, but of course you know best how far to venture."

"Yes, yes, indeed! no woman ever studied a husband more closely. His is a very complex character, yet I think I understand him perfectly," and she leaned her head upon her hand musingly, while I surveyed her with tender interest, not unmixed with compassion.

A thought passed through my mind then, that she might after all be mistaken in this so considered perfect estimate of her husband's character — that there might be, deep lying within his nature, pitfalls that she knew nothing about and paradoxes that he himself scarcely knew of.

The flash of thought was scarcely over before Madame Lavigne resumed speech, looking up eagerly now, as if inspired by some new intention.

"I will relate you the whole story," she said, "and then you shall tell me in turn what you think of the treatment we have received and our hard fortune. I believe I can depend on your interest, Miss Harz, to hear me through, on your candor to sympathize with me and mine?" she spoke interogatively, pausing for a reply.

"Yes, surely Madame Lavigne, I should be ungrateful to be otherwise than interested in what concerns you; yet believe me, no curiosity is mingled with this sentiment. If these details are to cost you one pang, pray spare —"

"My hearer?" she interrupted, smiling. "No, Miriam, I will not spare you. You are one of us; 'you are in for it now,' as the saying is, be it ever so tedious. So listen, while I recount to you the perfidy of Armand Lavigne. He was my husband's uncle, the owner of great estates, the brother of his father, and the occupant and rebuilder of Bellevue, which was at the time of his marriage to his wealthy wife, as old and forlorn a place as Beauseincourt.

"These brothers were both made widowers early, and were each left with one child. Our cousin Celia was the daughter of Armand, my husband the son of Roger Lavigne. There were about five years between them. For the first time for some generations the two estates had concentrated again in the hands of brothers, through intermarriages be-

tween relatives, not profitable to detail here. Between these brothers themselves, there existed a very strong and even passionate attachment, such as is not often to be met with even in this close relation. It was the wish of their lives, that their children should be united, and the two estates thus blended into one, which would have made the family powerful again and my husband of course a very rich man.

"Difficulties grew up, however, of an unexpected nature; the young people did not fancy each other, and cousin Celia persisted in marrying Major Victor Favrand, a handsome young attorney of Charleston, well born and well bred, but without fortune, a protegé of John C. Calhoun's. This step of hers of course exonerated perfectly Colonel Lavigne from any possible charge of disobedience or want of duty, and his uncle Armand seemed so to have understood matters, for he announced publicly his intention of dividing his property equally between his nephew and daughter at his own death, and Roger Lavigne died with this understanding.

"In some unexplained way, however, and after our marriage, my husband had the misfortune, I suppose, to offend the whimsical old despot, though how, exactly, he never comprehended, and at his death it was found that every thing he possessed was bequeathed in trust for cousin Celia and her children or child; and failing this or these, it was to pass over my husband's head and vest in his son or sons.

"My poor daughters were left out on the Salic law principle, I suppose, so potent in France; for although old Armand Lavigne could not speak one word of French himself, he still maintained these extraordinary notions derived from his foreign descent. Now you see how Colonel Lavigue has been blighted."

"Has your cousin Celia children?" I asked.

"One only, and that"—before she replied, hesitating and swallowing hard,—"an idiot. Have you never heard of her, Miriam?" speaking low.

"Never, I assure you; but being an idiot—"

"Ah! that is the crying sin of all," she interrupted, indignantly. "Being an idiot, she is still to inherit for her life that princely estate; for the domain of Bellevue is but a fragment of the vast property of Armand Lavigne. His rice plantations yield an enormous revenue, and cousin Celia and Major Favrand enjoy this, while she lives. At her death, her husband is cut off entirely, except through courtesy, re-

specting which he is to have the right to reside at Bellevue, or elsewhere with a suitable income, as long as the idiot lives; not an hour longer. Poor Marcelline! how much misery and happiness hang on her wretched existence!"

"What an unjust and unaccountable testament! Major Favrand on the one hand, and your husband on the other, seem equal sufferers."

"He disliked them both equally it seems," she continued, "the detestable old tyrant and hypocrite, or else in order to insure length of life to the idiot and wreak his spite on us in this manner, he has made the interest of the father coincident with the welfare of the child, for whom he naturally cares very little. It is one or the other, of course, Miriam."

"But Walter, your son, will still inherit this estate in the fulness of time?"

"Yes, if he survives the idiot, not otherwise. Should he die early, and leave no brother, it passes out of our family entirely, to a relative of that wife's who (herself a widow enriched by her first husband) brought his great estates to Armand Lavigne,—some poor crippled boy inherits, born just before he died, on whom he conferred by proxy, the name of his own father, and then adopted as his heir, and in case of this youth's death before his majority, the whole estate is to go to found an Institution for idiots."

"What a complicated affair it is! But should Walter receive the estate, will he have the right to will it as he pleases?"

"Yes, fortunately (and it seems to have been an oversight), unless he should die before he comes of age or have a surviving brother, in which latter case this relative would succeed; he has the right of bequest. But that" she said, coloring slightly, "is improbable; our children have all been girls, dead or living, except Walter, our pride and perfection!"

"That he may outlive Marcelline the idiot is my sincere, and, I believe, righteous prayer, dear Madame Lavigne," I said, "for the injustice of the whole proceeding is manifest. But then poor Major Favrand! In case of his wife's death, what would become of him? Would Walter divide the estate? would the law give him nothing?"

"Oh, with their enormous revenue, I have little doubt that Major Favrand is rich in his own right by this time, or at least he ought to be from accumulation of income, not-

withstanding his great extravagance; his horses, his houses, his pictures, jewels, entertainments, his magnificent presents to artists and actresses. Of this last, however, I assure you Cousin Celia does not know one syllable," she added, mysteriously, with a finger on her lip and smiling eyes.

"What a princely being! It sounds quite fabulous to hear of a sober-sided American citizen committing such acts of extravagance! I have always before associated rice with great frugality. A wooden spoon and bowl or chop-sticks and a little Ghee; henceforth I shall look upon it as a golden grain — a Midas-like production, answerable for many follies."

"But he is perfectly devoted" she resumed, "notwithstanding all this, to Cousin Celia, and she thinks him perfection. He only indulges his tastes when absent from her, and he spends nearly all of his time now at Bellevue, to do him justice, since she has become so delicate. She is almost an angel, Miriam, and her time will be short on this earth, her physicians say. She has been too ill to call on you yet; but you will see her later, I hope — that is, if God spares her;" and she mused, shaking her head sadly.

"But have we not been horribly treated, and can you wonder at Colonel Lavigne's morbidness on this subject?" she pursued, after a pause.

I repeated to her my convictions, but I must confess my chief sympathy at this moment was for the unseen and suffering mother of the poor unfortunate one. What power has gold to gild a sorrow like hers? What strength is there in man to lift away the heavy hand of fate?

That night Bertie waked me from troubled sleep. She had crept into my bed, as she frequently did before day, this being her time of arousing for a few minutes out of profound slumber, and mine, it seemed, for slumberous unrest.

"You are moaning, again, Miss Miriam" she said, "and as usual, it is Mabel you call on. Who is this Mabel who causes you such pain? some fairy, I believe — perhaps Queen Mab herself who perches on your pillow."

"My little sister, Bertie,— there, be still; you surprise my secrets out of me by awaking and questioning me so suddenly."

"Aye, but it is best you should wake and make a 'clean breast' of it, when you suffer so. How old is Mabel?" very solemnly, composing her arms over her breast.

"Younger than yourself."

"And you left her — forsook her, I suppose, Yankee fashion! Yes, I thought there was remorse at work or something of that kind."

"Child, you are unjust, suspicious, hard of heart. It little becomes your tender years."

"To see the truth?" she interrupted, vividly, "I know, I know! that always was a fault of mine, but I can't help it. I wish I could not see it. I sometimes wish I was blind, blind, as others are," shutting her eyes, beneath the lids of which slow tears were stealing, as she spoke, and clasping her hands closely.

Touched by this sign of feeling, I resumed gently,

"You have no right to judge me so harshly, Bertie, until you know more. That is all I meant by my rebuke."

"Yes, and I will know more," turning upon me suddenly and fiercely. "Do you suppose I am going to be tormented in this way forever? I will tear open your trunk — I will write back to the North — I will descend to any meanness to find out who and what you are; for I love you — love you. That is explanation enough." And almost with the emotion of a lover avowing his passion, she threw her arms about me and buried her head in my bosom.

"Bertie, how strange, how improper, this conduct is!" I said, gently disengaging myself from her embrace; and, raising her face in my hands, I kissed her cheek. "Poor child! how you must have suffered, to feel thus! What has troubled you so, Bertie?" I murmured.

"Oh nothing, very recently; that is, I thought of course you had by this time heard all about it, — the bear, and all that. My sisters are very communicative, generally; have they never told you?"

"Never, Bertie; your references are quite incomprehensible to me."

"Then let them remain so, or go to others for an explanation, and be sure and believe every word they tell you," lifting a warning hand. "*They* know everything, of course, conceited wiseacres," laughing bitterly, then turning her back on me with folded arms. "Let us go to sleep now, so as to be fresh in the morning. This is the horrible hour, old Shakspeare says, 'when churchyards yawn, and graves give up their dead.' What was that stuff you were reading in Hamlet yesterday?"

"Never mind, Bertie; you are quite right, we had best go to sleep now; and if those Shakspeare readings haunt you so, I shall entreat your parents to permit your absence."

"You will do no such thing. I choose to be present at every one of them; they divert me; they are as good as a hanging to a Yankee! There, now, lay down no laws of banishment for me, or I shall disappear some night and then suspicion will fall on you!" and again she laughed.

"We will discuss all that in the morning. Let us sleep now, Bertie, if possible;" and I laid my hand on her arm.

"Well, to oblige you, I will condescend to drop into the arms of Murphy, as Sam Weller called old Slumber. I believe, by-the-by, I like Samivel better than any puppet Dickens ever wired; don't you?"

No answer to this singular tirade and quaint characterization.

"Well, silence gives consent; it is all the same as if you said, 'Yes, indeed, Bertie,' in your Yankee fashion — even more agreeable, indeed, because imagination always beats reality, mine does, at least. Yet, after all," after a pause, "you are a glorious creature, Miriam Harz! just as you lie there in your frilled cap and ruffled bed-gown! worth twenty little stumpy, goggle-eyed Queen Victorias, all bedizened with lace and jewels, and a crown on her pillow; and if I were a gentleman, I would drop the handkerchief at once right at your feet (you would pick it up of course). But I am not, unfortunately, and your chance is blue! A Yankee governess! Why, my dear," laughing contemptuously, "a high-toned Southern gentleman would just as lief wear a pumpkin shell for a hat, as to condescend to such an inconsistent alliance."

Another suggestive, impertinent pause.

"Still silent? I never saw such a woman in all my life. Hard as flint — cold as ice — meek as milk! Good heavens! what a strange compound! Well, I shall go to sleep, and try to dream of Mabel — I am clairvoyant you know, they say — so, good-night, I shan't utter another word;" and here the vibrant voice suddenly ceased, and silence gave signal for the approach of sleep, or thus, at least, I believed the case to be.

Yet I awoke at daylight to see Bertie standing by the window, through the parted shutters of which could be dimly discerned the red rays of the rising sun, employed in

gazing silently upon a miniature, which I recognized instantly as that which I now missed from my neck and which always lay next my heart, suspended by a fine Venetian chain.

I rose on my elbow with severity imprinted on my aspect, prepared to rebuke her. But the calm, sweet expression on the face of the young girl, unconscious of observation, as shown by the clear, revealing light of morning, while she gazed upon the picture, and her quick exclamation of "beautiful, beautiful!" as she pressed it to her lips, disarmed me, and I could only call her name that she might know she was observed.

"Bertie, Bertie!" I said sharply at last, for to my surprise she manifested no embarrassment, but coming to my side replaced the portrait in my hand, with a kiss and a kind "good-morning."

"You see I have done more than dream about your Mabel," she remarked, "I have seen her face to face, and she is truly an angel. How I wish I were one half as beautiful, one half as good," — and she sighed, — "as your lovely sister."

"You might at least, Bertie, have waited until I awoke before looking at this miniature. To unclasp it from my neck while I lay sleeping, was not what I would have expected of you; this was an advantage that you should never have taken; I am seriously offended."

"But I did not do this — indeed I did not, Miss Miriam!" she exclaimed, eagerly, "on my honor as a Southern lady I did not," and her small and slender frame was drawn to its utmost height as she spoke, her hand placed on her heaving, childlike bosom, while her flushed cheek and kindling eye gave evidence of earnest excitement.

"That is enough, Bertie," I made answer, scarcely forbearing a smile at her tragic pose; "but tell me how it happened to be exposed! Was it beside me on the floor? Where did you find it, and how did you know it to be Mabel?"

"Oh, for the last, the likeness is sufficient to prove it the face of your sister, though it is as much more beautiful than yours as sunlight is brighter than starlight. It seems that the catch of the chain had become unfastened and caught in the lace of the pillow-case, so that when you turned over in your sleep the miniature was dragged from its concealment

and remained on the bolster. I was awake early, indeed I never slept at all after your treatment of me, and I saw it there, and determined to have a good look, while I could have it all to myself — for you are a perfect dragon about this picture, I know. Just think of your keeping it concealed all this time, as if it had been your lover! Do tell me all about your Mabel, Miss Miriam. It would be such delight to me."

"Not now, Bertie, I have reasons of my own for suppressing all traces of my family at this time from others. Your mother understands this, and has patience with me, and faith, too, I hope in the uprightness of my motives. You must try and share these feelings. Do you not know there are promises we make ourselves sometimes as binding as those we make to others and quite as solemn?"

"Do I not know? Oh, yes, I do know; would to Heaven I did not," she exclaimed suddenly, falling on her knees beside my bed and clasping her hands over her eyes. "My God, uphold me to keep all such promises!" she murmured passionately, and dropping her forehead on the mattress and extending her arms across it, she remained for some time immovable.

I gathered her hands into my own, "What ails you Bertie?" I asked, tenderly.

She raised her head.

"You have your reservations," she replied, "and I have mine. If you are a woman of honor, of feeling, as I believe you to be, don't question me, but believe that I can keep a secret as well as yourself, even if another's,— yours, for instance, were I to get hold of it accidentally." And she rose and bent above me with sudden mischief sparkling in her eyes. "It is time to rise, Miriam Monfort," she exclaimed exultingly. "Now, infidel, I have you on the hip."

"Bertie! this is unjust! unaccountable! where did you get hold of that name?" I gasped.

"I will tell you frankly, and hereafter will hold my peace, as father is forever coolly advising me to do. The miniature fell out of its case, in my hand. On the back is the inscription, 'Mabel to Miriam Monfort.' Then there is a lock of mixed brown and gray hair, a curl rather, with the words beneath, 'The hair of Reginald Monfort, preserved by his daughter;'" so you see it was accident, not curiosity, that put me in possession of the truth. I never liked the

name of Harz, I must confess, — never thought it suited you, never believed it was yours, to tell the truth, for I remembered at first you did not answer to it promptly or freely. No one else observed this, however, I suppose, so it is all the same, and you need not be uneasy. Marion and Madge and mother are as blind as bats about things of this sort, and father is in a dream most of the time, dazed. Is he not a great oddity, Miss Miriam?" carelessly, yet glancing at me sharply out of the corners of her great gray eyes, lucid as beryl stones.

"My dear, it is not for me, a stranger in his gate, to sit in judgment on your father, nor for you to make such suggestions."

"I know, I know that is the propriety of the thing. As if people could help their thoughts, — their judgments on others, even if unspoken! We can be silent, though."

"Understand me, Bertie, I hold you to no secrecy in this matter of my name. I shall not be breaking my self-made pledge, limited in time as it is, if you choose to discover and reveal my little mystery, — a matter of conscience, no more."

"I am no robber," she answered proudly, "to steal your secret for my own purposes. I never meant to find out more than you chose to tell me, notwithstanding my threats when I was in my 'King Cambyses vein,' as father calls it; my fit of funny despair, rather, as I feel it to be; something I cannot help, but am always ashamed of afterwards. You have very carefully guarded, that is plain, against detection. Your clothes are all marked simply 'Miriam' and very pretty clothes they are; and you have torn out the fly-leaf of every one of your books (I discovered that), and you keep one of them absolutely *locked*." Here she glanced at me suspiciously.

I was really shocked at this shameless acknowledgment of the regular detective system she had been practising, notwithstanding her disavowal of all intention of discovery, and I could not help interrupting her with a sudden grasp of the hand upon her arm, accompanied with the rebuking words:

"You amaze me, Bertie; so young; so quietly vigilant! It is fearful."

"Is it? Well, the consequence will be, I suppose, that you will hate me as all the rest do. I cannot help seeing, you

know, with these two clear eyes God gave me," placing her fingers on the lids as she spoke, and fixing upon my face glances that seemed to cut to my brain like trenchant steel. Never were there orbs so penetrating, so speaking, as hers, nor more clear and lucid ones when the right spirit prevailed.

"We have had enough of this melodrama," I retorted coldly. "I detest scenes. You will oblige me, Bertie Lavigne, by going on with your dressing, and leaving the room to me as soon as possible. I wish to rise."

"Your Majesty shall be obeyed," she rejoined mockingly, wheeling off quietly as she spoke, "*La Reine se leve!*"

I made her no reply, and in an incredibly short time I heard the door open and close softly, and had the satisfaction of knowing that my little tormentor was gone.

When she came into the schoolroom that day, all memory of what had occurred seemed to have left her brain, and she was intent upon her studies with a diligence unusual to her temperament. We were reading French history, I remember, and she seemed to revel in the period of Charles the IX. and his terrible mother, with a strange, tragic interest, nor did she share the enthusiasm of my other pupils for the gallant Henry of Navarre, nor against the Medicis. I understood this perverted fancy later, but at the time it appalled me.

It chanced soon afterwards that Madame Favrand called at Beauseincourt, and among others inquired for me at a period when I was indisposed with headache, and unable to receive her. In speaking of this visit to me later, and the regret that had been expressed at my absence, Margaret Lavigne took occasion to descant on the merits of her Cousin Celia and to touch on the misfortune that shadowed her life.

"We never go to Bellevue," she said, "without sending her word previously that we are coming, for she has the most morbid dislike to having her poor idiot seen, or even heard, and always conceals her in another part of the house on such occasions. Not one of us has ever beheld her, save Bertie, and that was an accident. Did mamma never tell you about it?"

At this crisis of the conversation, a faint groan was audible in one corner of the large saloon in which we were sitting, and the fall of a book on the waxed parquet, was distinctly heard, as Bertie, rising in the shadow, fled rapidly out of the room with her hands before her eyes.

"I had no idea she was near us," said Madge, sorrowfully, "or I should never have stirred that subject, it always agitates her so frightfully. What a strange being she is, to be sure. She is perfectly morbid about it, and we are all forbidden to refer to Marcelline in her presence. But she hovers around like a spirit."

"Be more discreet then in future, Madge. I do think Bertie's nervous condition a singular one, though a stranger to its cause. You must avoid as far as possible encouraging this state of things."

"Oh, she ought to be corrected of such folly," said Madge, tossing her pretty head; "not afraid of the reality of danger, and scared to death at mere unsightliness! Such an inconsistency! I am more afraid of father's bear than I could be of any human monstrosity that I knew to be perfectly harmless. Yet Bertie feeds it, or sees it fed, every day, pretending to abhor it all the while. Did you ever know such a little budget of perversity and self-will in all your life, Miss Harz?"

"Bertie is different, Madge, in some respects, from any one I have ever known; very interesting though to me for many reasons. I can perfectly understand, too, the difference in the impression of horror that a natural and unnatural creature would make upon one's nerves. I think I should feel that way myself."

"Yet you are terribly afraid of the bear, too, Miss Harz. I can see you tremble and turn pale when father plays with it."

"Yes, Madge, I am very cowardly with regard to wild animals, I confess, and never can feel the least confidence in their tameness or consistency. I shudder, even before caged serpents and tigers at a menagerie, and was once so powerfully magnetized by a royal lion that lay all his stately length behind iron bars, snapping and winking his great amber eyes at me, that I came near fainting against his cage, unable to withdraw from it. Yet you see, last week, notwithstanding my terror of snakes, that when the moccason attacked us, I summoned resolution to kill it; otherwise it must have struck Louey. You will acknowledge this was not exactly cowardice!"

"No, no, indeed, the truest courage, rather, for I saw how you loathed your task. It gave us all a true respect for you, Miss Harz. Marion and I were the cowards then. We thought of nothing but flight."

"Very natural at your age; but you see the same necessity for action does not exist with regard to your father's bear, and I am unaffectedly afraid of it. I am amazed and fascinated at once by the rashness of Colonel Lavigne. Bertie's conduct, too, with regard to it, impresses me in the same way. I shudder to pass the creature, yet if he were to attack us, we should have to summon resolution you know, and defend ourselves.

"Oh, I never could in the world! and the fate of those children that mocked Elijah would be mine. I should be eaten up alive. I was never intended by Providence to defend myself. With your permission, Miss Harz, I intend to depute that duty some day to another — a knightly gentleman."

Madge was a little coquette by nature, and her thoughts ran much on a future of love and romance. But snow was not purer than her virgin heart — though certainly far colder.

CHAPTER IV.

THE plantation of Beauseincourt was of great extent, but impoverished by the injudicious culture of several successive generations, it yielded but scant return to the planter, and was much of it "turned out" as it is called in those regions, or abandoned to spontaneous growth. A portion of it had become an almost trackless jungle of pawpaws and palmettos, and a sort of chaparral of dwarf trees; the thorn locust, small black oak and chinquapin shrub, being in the ascendancy, with occasional sprinklings of plat cedar and old field pine — a very scrubby assemblage.

There was nothing imposing about this recent growth of trees; but it served as effectually as a loftier one could have done, to shut in and narrow the view, and for a long time conceal from my observation, the contiguous estate of Bellevue.

The grounds of Beauseincourt, laid out amongst stately

forest-trees, had once been of great beauty, as from the design was still apparent, though now the once carefully kept roads and walks were weed-grown, and uninviting to the pedestrian. The copses, planted on the European plan of contrast of foliage, were densely matted together in many places, and impervious to sun or shower, and had become homes for the owl and serpent. Unrestrained and overgrown as the once carefully kept shrubbery had become by neglect, the remnants of "bosquets and alleès" were still discernible, and many an indestructible stone bench, or broken urn, or mutilated statue green with exposure and coated with mossy rime, bore witness of departed care and opulence, beneath the interlocked "berceaux."

To me it was exquisite enjoyment to roam untrammelled by ceremonials or observances over this luxuriant and lonely land, attended most often by a troop of young flower-crowned nymphs, as fair as those who clustered about Calypso. Their secluded lives, passed under refining influences, had not failed to set a seal on form and feature, on manner and expression.

"There may be city maidens more brilliant and beautiful, more informed and self-possessed, more stylish and accomplished, but there never were more guileless and innocent and upright natures, nor sweeter faces than belonged to this untutored band of Southern sisters. They were flowers, fostered by rain and sunshine, — not hot-house exotics forced into bloom by an artificial process.

For the first time in my life I found myself the centre for respect and affection, and this impulsive homage unsealed a thousand springs of feeling in my own bosom and reacted magically on my whole nature. To me, my pupils turned for counsel and support, with the consent and encouragement of their parents, and every noble principle of life was involved in fulfilling their expectations. As I have said before, my health, my heart, my intellect woke up beneath these new influences, and I, who had found the world dreary, possessing all the advantages of fortune and position, was now content in the narrow sphere to which fate had consigned me. All this was in the beginning, when I could know nothing of the snares that were to encompass me, the depths that lay beneath me or the Zoöphyte arms of sympathy that were to drag me down.

Early in October, Colonel and Madame Lavigne were

obliged to go to Savannah for a week, and I was left in charge of their children during their absence. The housekeeping, being very methodical, went on perfectly well under the auspices of Aunt Felicitè and Uncle Jura, with the occasional supervision of Marion, the eldest daughter, little more than seventeen years of age, but discreet beyond her years. To me, however, the far more responsible task was committed of caring for the welfare in every way of the daughters of the house, docile and well-disposed as they were, with one exception. And even in this exceptional case there was so much that was warm and genuine and true-hearted, that when moved to reproof, I was seldom really offended or excited.

With Bertie I must bear, — I saw that plainly as all the rest did, — but I would bear in a different spirit. I determined from the first that I would patiently endeavor to control her for her own benefit, or endure her faults with compassionate forbearance, not cold and even ill-constrained toleration. Marian and Madge would not for the world have been harsh to their younger sister; they were essentially womanly and gentle, but they came as little as possible in contact with her variable moods, her quaint and fearless sarcasms, which never failed to hit the target right in the centre. She, too, like her father, whom she outwardly resembled (an improved and revised edition, however, in every way be it repeated, of the old half-worn, tawny leathern-bound volume), was to me a study and a puzzle, one that unlike its precedent, perhaps, I would be able to make out in the end, or try to, let it cost what it might.

I was not obliged to wait very long, unfortunately, for a partial solution of my mystery. The reticent nature unfolded itself beneath the hand of disease, involuntarily, as a storm lays open the folds of a lily to disclose the canker worm within. It was on the very day after the departure of Colonel and Madame Lavigne that I found Bertie absent from the schoolroom, on the plea of a slight headache, not unusual with her. That evening, however, she was better, and we took our usual walk together, after which she ate well and slept soundly. Indeed her ordinary slumber was profound beyond any normal sleep I have ever witnessed, great blessing that it often proved to her, and shield, as may appear hereafter.

She rose early habitually, and on the following morning

made her toilet according to custom, before I got out of my bed; and after her visit to the bath-room, stood on this occasion, I remember, in her loose wrapper, slowly brushing out her tawny, waving hair before the mirror in her usual absent fashion, when she turned suddenly to me, confronting me with the strange remark,—

"So you would not tell me what you thought of my father! I have my reasons for wishing to know, however. You have 'the glance,' they say!"

"What do you mean by that, Bertie?"

"Oh, the insight into others, that all people with eyes like yours possess. I feel that you are looking right into me, all the time, or trying to, but I have a little door in my breast that I can open or shut as I please. Do you never hear it creaking upon its hinges?"

"Bertie, Bertie! what extravagance!"

"I bet my life I know what you think of father though, as silent as you are! You think him a very funny, fanciful old gentlemen, as harmless as a beagle with his eye-teeth knocked out! But that is just where you are mistaken, Miss Miriam Monfort. He is tragical, dire, and deeper than the Caribbean Sea. But don't tell mother this for the world, or (whispering) there would be an end to both of us, to you and me. She would shut us up in the schoolroom to a certainty as old Prosper Lavigne did his wife, and starve us to death slowly."

"Your mother is merciful, Bertie, very I think, and so is —"

I hesitated, for she approached me with uplifted, threatening brush and sparkling eyes, as if to check my expression.

"Child! child! what do you mean?" I exclaimed, arresting her hand sternly; "are you mad?"

She sat down and burst into a bitter laugh.

"I thought I should intimidate you. Yankees are such cowards," she said, "there let me go; I will not repeat the experiment; don't be afraid. But you shall see what I am really going to do; and as I released her hand, she seized the small penknife that lay open on my desk beside a half-made pen, and before I could stop her had stripped up the sleeve of her dressing-gown, baring her small, white arm.

"I am going to let out my Huguenot blood, you see — practise a little venesection, as that old quack, Doctor Du-

rand, calls it. I shall keep every drop of my Benoit blood, Miss Harz, I will indeed. Don't take the knife away! You don't know what a black stream it is, that Lavigne fluid. It is inky! I shall be so much better without it — I shall indeed; and then even you will learn to love and respect me."

Tears were flowing down her face now, and she seemed faint from her exertion or emotion, I knew not which. I placed my arm about her, and she leaned her head upon my shoulder, with closed eyes, murmuring low, as she reposed thus:

"You see he was my idol, Miss Harz, above all the rest. I loved him — but I found that he had feet of clay. I hate French people!" and her gray eyes, now raised to mine, shone with a green phosphorescent light, "and everything French, even bonnets and dresses. I would rather be a Chinese, and have club-feet — I would, indeed, than wear gaiter-boots and belong to this Huguenot aristocracy! I dare say Charles IX. and his mother, served them right in having them massacred! I only wish old "Biseul" Prosper Lavigne had been one of them; but he got away you know, and came here, and his son after his death straggled off from the rest to the wilderness, and built this fatal, fatal place. Oh, God!" covering up her eyes and shuddering, "oh! you don't know half, and never will know, and they, poor things, know nothing of it either, and they call me queer and morbid, and I pity and forgive them; but which of them could have done what I have done for the preservation of our — *his* honor?"

"Hush, Bertie, not another word. As you love your parents, respect me, yourself — fear to offend your God! I have done wrong not to stop this hysterical fit earlier. If there is any more of this, I shall send for Doctor Durand. I am determined now."

"Do as you please; I am not afraid to face old Durand or any other Huguenot charlatan in the land. He is a good soul, though," shaking her head, drearily, "in spite of his boasted ancestry, and rides down a great deal of his original wickedness, no doubt, going so fast over hill and dale. I, too, was something better while we were travelling and away from this place. But since I have returned everything has come back to me as fresh as before. I paid King well to feed 'Mumbo' while we were away, though, for

that was all important. You see he must never be hungry," whispering frightfully, "or there's no telling what might become of us all. Just suppose he had been starved that day, instead of crammed to the throat — Oh, horror!"

And again she concealed her face.

"But this is all nonsense — Hebrew, to you, of course, who know nothing at all about it," she exclaimed, suddenly rising, and approaching the mirror again, where she very quietly resumed the brushing of her hair, leaving me inexpressibly shocked.

Yet it was not many minutes before she returned to her subject.

"Did you ever lead a bear, Miss Harz?" she asked, turning quickly upon me just as I had folded up my note to Doctor Durand, which, a moment later, I gave to Sylphy, with whispered instructions, quietly and instantly obeyed.

Her face was flushed and her eyes were glittering now, I saw, with the fierce fire of fever.

"If not," she continued, "you can't tell what wild work it is. It requires superhuman strength, but an angel clothed in shining armour, aided me that day, and we dragged him along by his chain, while he pulled back madly all the time, and in this way *she* was spared — whom I may not name — and his hand," lifting her own slender one impressively, and raising her flashing eyes to heaven "left clean from the taint of blood. Holy Father, preserve it so!"

The small hand fell slowly — a sudden change passed over the glowing face — a spasm of pain succeeded by a pallor, bleak as that of the grave, and but for my supporting arm, she must have fallen to the floor. As it was, she was quite unconscious for many hours. At the end of that time, Doctor Durand stood beside her bed, and pronounced her malady brain fever. Then began the old, old, oft renewed struggle between the angels of Life and Death!

Surely if ever a human existence was earned by prayer, by ministry, by vigil, it was hers who then lay ill. Those Southern fevers burn rapidly to their culmination. Doctor Durand had many patients dependent on his care; it was necessary he should leave behind him in this instance a firm and consistent representative, and he was pleased to say he found me such.

People draw very near together who are engaged in the same good offices, and by the bed of Bertie Lavigne, Doctor

Durand and I struck hands. No romance is to spring from this avowal, believe me, my romantic reader. He was a man of fifty, somewhat bald and stout, and already supplied with a wife and goodly family of sons and daughters; I, a woman whose hope had sustained shipwreck, glad to take shelter on any hospitable shore; well knowing that her jewels of life were buried irrecoverably in the depths of the sea, and content to dispense with them, or any paste substitutes thereafter. It is easy to understand a compact such as this, and what calm consolation it promised, on both sides, when held in good faith.

From the first, Doctor Durand hoped, with the aid of good nurses, to be able to overcome the fever. Yet he wrote immediately to Bertie's father and mother to return, in view of the very worst; a summons which they did not receive, owing to a miscarriage of the mails, until after a letter had reached them from me announcing that their child was out of immediate danger. So that a week elapsed before they turned their faces homewards to find their daughter on the road to convalescence.

When Madam Lavigne entered the sick-chamber, she found Bertie sitting up, propped by pillows, the top of her head bare, it is true, where a blister had been applied,—her cheek pale, her voice tremulous; her appetite, however, keen, her temper querulous — "every sign good to the eye of the weather-wise observer," as Doctor Durand remarked, sapiently, glancing at me, as if to include me as his confederate in the remark, "and harbour nearly made."

There was a freemasonry already established between us two that continued uninterruptedly to the end, as shall be shown. But with regard to this patient over whom our natures met so kindly, there were reservations on my part too sacred to be laid open to his medical eyes; there were limits he never passed. In the deep watches of the night, when the slaves upon the floor slept soundly upon their pallets, and Madge and Marion, at my urgency, had withdrawn to their quiet beds, strange revelations left those delirious lips, to which all that had gone before, so unintelligible once, now furnished a comprehensive clue. It is not here that I will place this discovery in the power of the reader. Step by step must he attain his knowledge—his conviction. It is enough to say that from that hour, that young Southern girl, slight, and sallow, and wayward as she was, took place in

my mind as a heroine not inferior to some who have figured in history for all time. Courage, and self-sacrifice and rare reticence, had she manifested. And if her unformed mind staggered beneath its burden, and sent the body it warred in, blind and reeling to the verge of death, I, who knew her secret, could only admire and marvel the more. But with me it was sacred, even from her own eyes, though between us I felt that it must lie forever, like a sarcophagus in which the dead abide peacefully and undisturbed, and about which the living gather, unconscious or oblivious of the skeleton within.

When she was restored to health and consciousness, I saw that Bertie had forgotten not only the revelations of her delirium, but the wild suggestions of her feverish fancy on the day of her attack, and she never knew what clue of history she had thrown down to me in her irresponsible condition.

The bees have a marvellous way, for creatures so merely instinctive, of disposing of the gigantic bee moth, that infests their hives. They can neither expel so monstrous an adversary with their small strength, nor, if slaughtered, bear without destruction to their numbers, the effluvium arising from his dead, decaying body; so after stinging him to death by common consent, they go promptly to work and smear him with slime drawn from their own entrails, and glue him against the side of the hive he sought to desecrate, and hermetically seal him there, so that he becomes a stone excrescence, his own sarcophagus, as well as a moral and a warning. Thus did I promise myself it should fare with this ill-omened secret of poor Bertie's, as far as I was concerned; and it was my earnest and continued prayer that to her, also, God might grant the privilege of embalming it forever, with the vanished past, to carry out my simile.

With his characteristic absence of mind, Colonel Lavigne forgot for four or five days to deliver to me a package of papers, with which General Curzon had intrusted him. This consisted of many numbers of a local paper to which I had subscribed after leaving my native city, in the name of Miriam Harz — the same sheet my father had always pinned his faith to, and which came to me now with the aspect of an old familiar friend. These Journals had accumulated in the post-office of Savannah from a want of management on my part, though henceforth General Curzon had promised to forward them in order.

It happened very opportunely that Bertie had gone out for her first drive on the occasion of the incursion of the papers, so that I had time and space to examine them after my own fashion, unobserved and unqestioned by my vigilant companion. I revelled in the advertisements that brought street and shop so vividly before me, and the local items most of all. But the sheet I had clutched so firmly a moment before, fell noiselessly to the floor from my nerveless fingers after I had read one article, or notice, rather, headed by Editorial remarks, that arrested my attention as a snake charms a bird from a tree to flutter into its very jaws.

I sat spellbound, incredulous! Much wrong, much insult had I endured, but oh, nothing like to this before — nothing! I remember how everything swam around me for a season — how desperate were my struggles to resist the coming enemy; and having at last overcome it, by such resistance perhaps, how calmly I took up the paper again and read once more the maddening article, to be assured my eyes had not deceived me. Alas! alas! when did they ever do this?

It was a lengthy advertisement only, of which, however, I was the subject, prefaced as I have said, by some mild editorial remarks, enjoining attention to its requisitions, and professing to shed a few crocodile, newspaper tears over my hallucination or unhappy end.

I, sitting at the moment in calm possession of health and reason and a steady purpose, read with what feelings my reader can well imagine, the following characteristic paragraphs. The date was early in September.

"About two weeks ago, Miriam Monfort, aged nineteen, left her home suddenly and clandestinely, aided and abetted it is supposed, by some person or persons, inimical to her best interests, who are hereby adjured to come forward and by confession in part repair such participation. All effort to trace her steps has proved so far ineffectual on the part of her guardians and relatives, who stand ready to prove that she was at the time of her disappearance laboring under a distressing melancholy, caused it is supposed, by recent reverses, which it is barely possible may have impelled her to suicide.

"This idea, however, does not obtain among those who knew her best, her mania having assumed rather the form

of perverse restlessness, and a wish to leave her home and the friends once dear to her, on whom she has of late looked with undue suspicion and aversion. If, however, in opposition to our first expressed supposition, and through pretenses such as persons in her condition know well how to maintain for a season, she should have found among strangers a shelter and support, her harborers are called upon, not only in the name of the law, but common humanity, to declare her place of refuge, and surrender her into the hands of her careful and watchful friends, most anxious as to her safety.

"Miriam Monfort is the daughter of the late Reginald Monfort, of this city, a man esteemed by all who knew him, and holding a proud position from the circumstances of his family, refinement and large fortune — the last wrecked since his death, in the disasters of the Pennsylvania Bank. This catastrophe seems to have preyed upon the mind of the unfortunate young lady in question, and driven her forth as a wanderer, with a disordered reason.

"Miriam Monfort is above the medium height, and well-proportioned. Her face is remarkable rather than beautiful. Her complexion is dark, clear, and usually pale; hair and eyes very dark, the last large; nose well cut and small, mouth medium, with a short upper lip; teeth unusually fine; smiles rarely; voice low and harmonious; manner grave.

"As a painful but unmistakable guide to her identity, she has upon her right arm and shoulder, scars more or less visible from the effects of a severe burn received some years ago, which can be examined medically, without impropriety, by any one wishing to aid the cause of humanity, and possessing a clue to the truth of her position from other circumstances."

This precious publication, to which the attention of all sympathizing Christians was called by the pious editor, was signed by the familiar names of those arch conspirators, "Evelyn Erle" and "Basil Bainrothe."

"Hypocrites! felons!" I exclaimed aloud, as I dashed down the paper and set my foot upon it. "No runaway negro, or absconding galley slave, or penitentiary convict, was ever more ignominiously described! 'A maniac to be traced by her scars!' I will enter that inscription in my diary — my debit and credit book — after the fashion of ancient Italian foemen! God knows when or how I shall

draw my pen across it and write 'cancelled,' beneath. God knows; but in Him I trust — the God of David, the God of my forefathers! Oh, sweet is vengeance! More precious than love, honor, hope, truth, religion!"

And for a space the spirit of Esther abode within me, and the clash of the Hebrew cymbals resounded in my brain.

When I was calmer, I delved through the rest of the papers, until I reached the notice of Claude Bainrothe's marriage to Evelyn Erle. Shelley was right; there is but one thing fixed and that is mutability. So strangely do we change! Not a heart-beat gave tribute to the love of old days — the fire that in dying out had withered all the flowers of my existence, and left it blank and arid. I smiled derisively at the flourishing account of the gorgeous ceremony, performed in church, under the auspices of some influential prelate, and the newspaper tribute to the proud descent of the lady, the prestige of the groom, as an attaché of a national legation, and the standing of his father.

Lower down, however, was something that smote my soul. Ay, the Parthian dart was there! I saw that the wedding party had sailed for Havre the day after the nuptials, and had taken with them my dear one. "Mr. Basil Bainrothe and his ward, Miss Mabel Monfort, accompanied the happy pair on their bridal tour, which will comprise the entire continent, so that their sojourn abroad will be long, we regret to say, etc."

What a sympathizing reporter! How well he must have been paid for that bit of flummery in which I distinctly saw the master-hand! Yes, that shaft had sped home; the sea already rolled between me and my darling, and we might never meet again until the portals of the grave had been passed by both. So far away! Oh, even in absence to be near the beloved object is partial presence. I threw my arms before me, and clutched the air.

"Gone, gone!" I sobbed aloud. "Oh, little sister, was I right, after all, in forsaking you?"

God knows the chill of death seemed to settle slowly over me, as I contemplated our separation and the obstacles that lay between us. How cunningly was my evil genius working out his purposes. Even at a distance that hand of hate had power to fling its poisoned arrow at my heart, and strike me surely, though an unseen target, through the unerring instincts of cunning and vengeance.

When I went, as it was necessary for me to do (for was I not in harness?), to the mirror to arrange my hair for supper on that occasion, after locking away those terrible publications, I saw, or thought I saw, how I should look when I should have grown old. As I stood, mechanically brushing out my locks, the expression of my face was to my own eyes as that of a stranger, and my features seemed collapsed and sunken. I scarcely knew myself.

"I will not let them kill me!" I cried, passionately, as I turned away from my own strange aspect, as I saw it reflected in the glass, and clasped my hands upon my heaving heart. "I will live for myself — live if only for my revenge! Shylock was right, after all. There are insults and injuries which only a pound of flesh can repay, and that lying nearest the heart. I shall still drink 'Skalle,' I trust, from your skull, Basil Bainrothe!" and I laughed bitterly at my own absurd melodramatic bitterness.

Oh, vain and impotent threats, figures of film instead of power! How soon were you dispersed! How darkly derisive proved the future of all such self-sustaining menaces! How truly hath God spoken the thrilling words, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." How weakly boastful is mortality! Not for me, not for any other suffering woman is such resolution possible of fulfilment, without entire annihilation of happiness, without the surrender of all that constitutes womanhood and truth.

But in those days my Judaic blood asserted itself loudly, and I turned for fierce consolation to the curses of David — the deeds of Judith and Jael — the song of Deborah! I lived upon such aliment as these afforded, and read, with a passion and power that gained me rapturous applause, some portions of Macbeth on that very evening — a play to which Colonel Lavigne was intensely partial, but which had never before awakened my own interest or sympathy. Yet it was not the successes of Macbeth, nor yet his subsequent remorse that thrilled me thus. It was the joy I felt in his coming punishment, the sympathy I gave to his victims and their avengers. In my eyes he was a common felon.

When Malcolm says:

> "Let us seek out some desolate shade, and there
> Weep our sad bosoms empty."

I felt as if another voice than mine replied in those manly, ringing words of Macduff:

"Let us rather
Hold fast the mortal sword, and like good men,
Bestride our downfallen birthdom."

And again when Malcolm says:

"Let us make medicine of our great wrongs
To cure this deadly grief—"

"Dispute it like a man."

Or when the nameless "Lord" observed to Lenox:

"The son of Duncan,
From whom this tyrant holds the due of birth,
Lives in the English court and is received
Of the most pious Edward with such grace
That the malevolence of fortune nothing
Takes from his high respect—"

I took these things home, and felt that my own wrongs and fortunes were portrayed. My enthusiasm of manner, however, transferred itself into the utterance of the tyrant's part as well as those of his enemies and avengers, and Colonel Lavigne condescended to say, when I had concluded:

"A great actress was lost in you, Miss Harz. By Brahma! with a little practice, you would be equal to Fanny Kemble, and perhaps the original Siddons herself."

I thanked him deprecatingly.

"Oh don't be at all modest about it," he rejoined, "I never flatter, and only give you your due, which perhaps may be of service in biasing you, as to your future means of livelihood. I should think you would achieve fortune more rapidly on the stage than in the schoolroom. "I see not why one profession or calling may not be as respectable as the other," he added. "It is only persons who stand on family pride, who need dislike the name of actors."

"I comprehend this, believe me, perfectly," I replied. "I have never felt that I was the subject of flattery from your lips, since I came to Beauseincourt;" swelling a little at heart, but perfectly tranquil, as far as met the eye.

He paid no attention to my rejoinder, seemingly occupied with his own reflections; then suddenly, and rather irrelevantly asked me what scene I preferred in the tragedy we had just been reading.

His cool, supercilious negligence, wholly unintentional as it seemed or was, always irritated me unduly, and I enjoyed

his surprise and disappointment no little, when I replied, with entire truth, however, and very briefly, "That part in which Macduff bears in Macbeth's head on a pole." After which sage criticism, I speedily departed, leaving him standing in wide-eyed, open-mouthed amazement,—snuff-box in hand.

"The children's governess" was beginning to assert herself, and his astonishment was unmistakable.

BOOK SECOND.

"He give up his old plans! I tell you, friend,
His soul is occupied with nothing else;
Even in his sleep, they are his thoughts, his dreams.

His policy is such a labyrinth,
That many a time when I have thought myself
Close at his side, he's gone at once, and left me
Ignorant of the ground where he was standing."

THE PICCOLOMINI.

"Will you guess nothing? Will you spare me nothing?
Must I go deeper? Ay, or no!"

PARACELSUS.

"Jesu Maria, shield her well!
Hush, beating heart of Christabel!
What sees she there?

* * * * *

Which, when she viewed, a vision fell
Upon the soul of Christabel,—
The vision of fear, the touch and pain;
She shrunk, and shuddered, and saw again."

COLERIDGE.

"I will not
Defend my father. Woe is me! I cannot;
But we are innocent. How have we fallen
Into this circle of mishap and guilt?

* * * * * *

O my foreboding bosom! even now,
Even now 'tis here, — that icy hand of horror.
I am grown so timorous, every trifling noise
Scatters my spirits, and announces to me
The footstep of some messenger of evil."

WALLENSTEIN.

BOOK SECOND.

CHAPTER V.

THE winter schoolroom of Beauseincourt was the vast attic chamber extending over nearly the whole central building, lit on either side by those dormer windows which gave the externe of the mansion so picturesque an appearance; windows which alone caught the sunlight, as eyes will smile sometimes when lips are sad and sombre.

During the summer season, the heat of this apartment, owing to the slate roofing, made it unendurably warm, and the broad upper gallery in the ell was then instead appointed for my use as an academy. I was reminded of the sufferings of prisoners "under the leads" in Venice, when on some rare occasion, to seek a book I think, I ascended to that extensive "roof-oven," in the month of September. Yet in November, fires had already become necessary to make it comfortable, and there was question now of introducing a stove in that vaulted apartment, in which it was easy to imagine one's self, when seated at the study-table in its midst, in some vast, old convent hall in countries beyond the seas.

A "dim, religious light" was diffused over the room from the small diamond-shaped panes of glass, set in leaden frames in dormer windows, to each of which casements a short passage, terminated by a raised platform, led from the central chamber, and it would be difficult to contrive a schoolroom in which fewer causes of outward "distraction" existed for the student.

In one of these small panes, now replaced by a perforated iron substitute, the stove-pipe was to be inserted, as the

builder of the Chateau of Beauseincourt had omitted to provide a flue for such a contingency.

The early ancestor of Colonel Lavigne had, it was said, made use of this extensive attic as a billiard-room, for the entertainment of other persecuted Huguenot gentlemen, or their descendants, rather, who came up occasionally from the lower settlements to sojourn with him in the wilderness. The exercise which forms so healthful an accompaniment of this noble game, had no doubt kept in circulation that eager Gallic blood of theirs, so as to make fires undesirable or superfluous; and it is probable that these gallant representative refugees would have much preferred to use the small caissons terminated by dormer windows, for pointing out cannon, could a foe have been conjured up, rather than the harmless black cylinder emitting smoke alone, now under consideration.

About placing this stove, which involved the safety of the castle, the Lord of Beauseincourt, usually so shy of approach, now came to see in person; or at least I supposed at the moment this was his errand, when I heard his peculiar step upon the threshold, and in another moment saw him enter the apartment.

I was writing in that steel-clasped diary of mine, I remember, the subject of Bertie's jealous remarks, and from which, let me say, "en passant," much of this retrospect is drawn, and was somewhat absorbed in my occupation, when I saw him pass my table on the opposite side. A burly terrestial globe intervening between us probably concealed me from view, as with his head averted and twirling a large brass key on his fingers, which he had evidently taken from the schoolroom door on entering, absently, as I supposed, after his frequent fashion, and most probably without turning it in the lock, he stalked slowly past.

Having finished the sentence on which I was employed, I stole quietly to the door, book in hand, and somewhat to my surprise, found it really fastened. I had but one resource now, to return upon my step and ask Colonel Lavigne, who had vanished into one of the short corridors, for this important key. As I approached him for this purpose, I heard him declaiming passionately, and paused.

"He believes himself alone," I thought, "and is probably rehearsing a part for our next reading; how very much he will dislike being detected in this Demosthenes-like proceeding!"

I hesitated, scarcely knowing what to do, with delicacy, when a few words that caught my ear determined me at once, and I lost no farther time in approaching his alley of sequestration, and requesting him to favor me with the key of the only door of egress, for I found myself of course a prisoner in his hands.

He turned abruptly on hearing my voice, and my heart stood still at the sight of his altered aspect. His arms were folded tightly across his breast, his face was that of a distorted mask, from which all mobility seemed vanished. His warped pupils glared luridly upon me, his lips, between which his projecting teeth showed like a yellow line, were set in a grim smile, indescribably repulsive.

"You here?" he said, loftily, at last. "How did you manage to conceal yourself? I conceived myself alone, and to me solitude is a privilege, even in my own house."

"I find it such also, even in the house of the stranger," I replied, coldly; "one not always attainable by me, and so I lingered here for purposes of my own. I had no expectation of being thus intruded on. I supposed myself mistress of these premises, at least after school hours."

My somewhat indignant manner, my defiance of his mean insinuations, brought down his tone or changed his impressions, perhaps, for he said quite blandly, and with an effort at playfulness even, meant I saw to carry off his embarrassment or conciliate my offended pride,—

"Curiosity is a Yankee trait, we all know, and you could not be blamed for its momentary indulgence. You heard my appeal, no doubt, and think me a madman, of course. No matter; you could not understand my ravings, and I will suggest to you, quite disinterestedly, discretion on this and all other similar occasions. Remember the fate of Fatima," and he laid his long, lithe finger on his crooked nose, and smiled at me just as Bluebeard himself might have smiled, I fancied, on a certain occasion.

My knees shook beneath me, my flesh crawled on my bones; to this weakness I confess, and I could only falter forth a renewed request for the key, stretching forth my hand piteously to receive it at the same time, when he advanced towards me with one sudden stride and with a clutch of his vigorous hand, drew me into the corridor and towards the window at which he himself had been standing, before I had time to resist, compelling me to ascend to the platform that he had vacated.

"Since you have heard so much, know all," he commanded; "your part is easy; you have only to look and listen, I shall not harm a hair of your sagacious, school-teaching head; so cease trembling like an aspen, and as your name is Miriam, you can readily imagine me, for the nonce, your brother prophet, looking out from afar on the land of promise he is destined never to reach. I am Moses, you see, and this is my Mount Nebo."

If any doubt of his insanity had existed before, it seemed confirmed now. A shuddering recollection of Bainrothe the rational flashed over my mind, — gone the next moment; for lunatic or not, I felt convinced that so far, Colonel Lavigne intended me no personal harm or insult, and my reason told me it was best, if possible, to appear undaunted when in the absolute power of a maniac. Yet had I stood on my place of execution, with the headsman beside me, I could scarcely have been more terrified than during the scene I have related, rapidly as it passed.

"There," he said, relaxing his grip on my arm, traced in purple bruises the next day, and pointing with his lank fore-finger straight across the dismantled woodland, "what do you behold? or here, I forgot your short-sightedness, being city bred; take this field-glass, which I keep always in readiness — for I, who am no cockney, measure miles with an eagle glance sometimes, and this assists even me; take it and sweep the land before you, and tell me your impression of what your eyes embrace. Do this and I release you," he added, calmly.

I would humor him to his bent, I determined now, and taking the glass from his extended hand I silently and literally obeyed the first part of his injunction, as with a magic glance I swept the broad lands before me. Far away beyond the trees whose dense foliage had until recently concealed the scene now lying outspread beneath my eyes, I beheld a fair and beautiful domain, whose close contiguity I had not before suspected. I knew, indeed, that the lands of Bellevue bordered those of Beauseincourt, but my impression had been, I knew not how received, that the dwellings were distant from each other by many miles. Yet here, within walking distance, lay the white mansion, standing in the midst of stately evergreens and verdant lawns, that I had heard imperfectly described as the residence of Madame Favrand. Shown by the powerful glass

I held, I traced every detail with pre-Raphaelite distinctness. The leaves upon the great magnolia-trees quivered before me, and the silvery thread which marked the fountain springing from its basin of white marble was shivered into jewels by the clear light of an autumnal sun. The whole scene, as beheld in that translucent atmosphere and through that magical glass medium, was one of complete enchantment.

"So that is Bellevue!" I exclaimed, still gazing spell-bound, and forgetting for the moment the terrors that had beset me. "'Bellevue,' well called the beautiful view, for certainly I have seen nothing lovelier in all my varied travels." And, dropping the glass, I turned to my Mephistopheles in the enthusiasm of the moment, oblivious of my earlier suspicions. "Here, take your field-glass, Colonel Lavigne," I said, extending it towards him; "it is a remarkably fine one, and give me my schoolroom key instead, if you please. I have an engagement below stairs."

"I will not detain you long," he observed, quietly; "be governed by me to-day. You have read of the 'Ancient Mariner,' — well, I am like him, sometimes, that is all. I have my moods — my spells occasionally — when the person I happen upon must stand and hear. You are the wedding guest, you know, so you must bide my time though the bassoon calls you. I want to explain to you very briefly indeed" —

"Madame Lavigne has already done that," I interrupted, passionately. "I understand all the injustice of your uncle's will. I sympathize with you earnestly in the loss of this place. Now you must indeed spare me further detail, and let me go."

"You appeal to me as though I were your grim jailor, instead of respectful interlocutor. There, take the key: yet I adjure you to remain, if only for a few minutes; and, with your liberty in your own hands, I think you are too generous to refuse me."

"Set the door open yourself, Colonel Lavigne, and I will hear what you have to say, not otherwise," I rejoined, with a beating heart, for I had experience of that key, and had never been able yet to turn it in its rusty wards, huge, unmanageable instrument that it was, in feminine hands.

He did as he was desired to do, at once, mutely returning to the window again, well pleased, unconscious of my strat-

agem. I was still standing, perfectly reassured by this time, on the platform. His tall figure needed not to ascend the step to place his head on a level with my own; and, leaning against the wall of entrance to the "cul de sac," so as to frustrate my escape, perhaps, he delivered himself in words that I can never forget — in words and gestures that had all the deliberation and irrelevancy of a studied speech.

"Talk of a just God, and look at my lost heritage, placed like the cup of Tantalus almost within my grasp!" and his long fingers worked convulsively, — "almost against my lip, as one might say, a draught of never-to-be-tasted ecstasy! I was reared upon that hope, that delusive promise, and by every law, human and divine, the place is mine and Walter's, — it matters little which; our interests are identical. No father and son were ever more united.

"For five and twenty years, Miss Harz, I was taught to believe myself the future master of Bellevue. This dream was my bread of life; and, even after Celia's inopportune marriage, it reconciled me to wait patiently for the time when I should be able to rebuild the halls of my ancestors, and make the name of Lavigne again a power and a glory in the land.

"There were full coffers, I knew, other wide estates, and I could have even foregone 'Bellevue' itself, cheerfully, during her lifetime, had justice been accorded otherwise to me or mine, or have surrendered it forever had Celia Favrand been the mother of children worthy to inherit her estate or name. But then, as now, when that iniquitous will was framed, that hideous goblin existed, and wise physicians had foreseen that she would be the last as she was the first of Madame Favrand's offspring.

"Thus the old man, far-seeing and acute, as none but the devilish *old* ever become, fenced about her loathsome life with strange previsions sure and strong. Should this wretch survive her mother, already doomed, he has made the support and even enrichment of a whole family, a low-born widow, formerly the wife of his overseer, and her ravenous brood, coincident with the duration of this creature's existence; nay, he has enlisted Favrand himself, one of the most selfish and frivolous of well-intending men, in this unhallowed devotion, for his liberal income passes from him should she die before him, as does the principal, of which he is only one of many trustees, at the period of his wife's decease.

"Thus is Walter's inheritance indefinitely postponed. I shall be in my grave, he an old gray-haired man, in all probability, before it reaches him, under these previsions (or it may, indeed, vest only in his children), previsions, the dictates, as I must believe, of malice and implacable hatred alone."

Speaking in a monotonous tone, and most often with his eyes fixed on the ground or empty space, it was difficult for me to realize that I was the object of this address at all. Yet, at the first pause he made, the speaker evidently watched, with a gaze now fixed on my face, for a remark from my lips, indicative of attention, at least, if not profound interest.

"It is all very bitter and hard to bear, Colonel Lavigne, I acknowledge, but one had as well knock one's head against a stone wall as contend against the inevitable," was my commonplace and unsympathizing reply.

"The inevitable!" he repeated, derisively. "It is only the transcendentalists who admit such an idea at all in the conduct of life. I hold to the thought of Wallenstein. I forget who used the expression that struck me so in speaking to that deluded man, but it was Schiller's thought of course.

> "'Oh, believe me,
> In your own bosom lie your destiny's stars.'"

"Yet your favorite poet," I rejoined, promptly; "he that you place above all others, says, in your chosen tragedy, — the one you helped to read only a few nights ago with good effect, the drama of Fate, 'par excellence,' and of so-called necessity, —

> "'There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough hew them as we may.'"

"There's verse against verse, Colonel Lavigne."

"Very good, very good," he said smiling; then suddenly glowering at me, he asked in a deep and emotional voice, "but how do you think he would have made the sympathies turn had Duncan been an idiot, instead of a wise, just, venerable king? Do you suppose God values the lives of his creatures equally, and that there are no jeweller's scales in heaven as well as on earth, wherewith to

distinguish dross from gold? Come, you are a sensible woman,— I have known few as much so in the whole course of my lengthy life,— answer me that question frankly; something depends on your reply perhaps."

"Colonel Lavigne," I replied, earnestly, "I have remarked that God suffers the grain seed to fall to the ground for man to gather, whose interest it is to preserve it, and throws on the wings of the wind as with his own lavish hand the winged seed of the thistle and dandelion, and asclepias, plants despised of the husbandman, to be perpetuated and sown broadcast over the earth. I have come to believe from things like these, and they are to be observed in all of his undertakings, that his creations are universally dear to him, and that it is not for us to question His will or its utility — we who are so very limited in the nature of our organization. Let us bless his name for the beautiful strategem of parental love, through which so many of his imperfect creatures are cherished and made happy. An idiot is no doubt as dear to its mother's heart through her compassionate mercy alone, perhaps to God himself, as"—

"No sophistry if you please, Miss Harz; anything but that," he interrupted, with a menacing flash of the eye and an impatient waive of the hand. "You are an enthusiast, a dreamer, like the rest of your sex, and I have erred, I suppose, in believing you superior to common prejudices. When I have seen you interpret the masterpieces of our mighty Shakspeare, with a heaving breast, a flushing cheek, an eye of fire, I have said to myself, that is no common woman, though bound to common uses. I have dreamed a dream that can never know fulfilment — no matter what that dream. Ambition, power, love itself drop to nothing, it seems, in a mind as conventional as yours, when weighed against the claims of an incubus. You look amazed, but I will not explain my words, farther than to declare that they do not in any way aim to connect you with my own condition. I have a son, let me add, noble, young, beautiful as Apollo's self. The wife he weds, he will receive from his father's hand alone; it is an Old World custom 'noblesse oblige,' you know," with a mechanical bow, "and had I found you other than you are, there might have been a compromise. As it is I discard the matter utterly and forever. Let it go like other delusions. You too may go with the rest, Miss Harz," he added, sarcas-

tically; then turning from his post, he suffered me to pass on my way to liberty in courteous silence, surveying me as I went by him with an eye of pity, not unmixed with scorn, and a grim, derisive smile.

I walked quietly to the door, opened it suddenly, then flew down the stairway as if pursued by an evil fiend, and took speedy refuge in my chamber.

Hours afterwards, having occasion to cross the hall and gallery to speak with Madame Lavigne, I heard him come slowly down the attic stairway with that spectral tread of his, distinct, deliberate, measured, — the step of one who walks mechanically, or in somnambulic slumber. I have heard no other like it in all my life; its memory thrills me still.

When we met at the dinner-table, the brainsick warp which I had that morning first discerned in those usually clear and steadfast orbs had left them; and his manner was as unruffled as though he had not spent many hours in passionate soliloquy, or in unavailing wrestle with remorseless fate, or haply in bitter, silent self-conflict more unendurable still.

Late that evening he sent for me to the library. It was about the time, I knew, when the first instalment of my salary (to be paid quarterly by agreement) would fall due; and I had no excuse to refuse to obey his summons. He motioned me to a seat before the pine-wood fire, which diffused a cheerful light and aromatic odor through the large apartment; and at once began, standing as he was by the mantelpiece, to make some obscure apologies for his behavior in the morning. These I hastened to interrupt.

"Let that subject drop forever, Colonel Lavigne, I request," I said, impatiently. "With every disposition to do my duty, and earn your good opinion, I have none to enter into your family affairs, or share your purposes or plans for your children, whatever these may be. I must entreat, that, in future, I may be spared such painful entanglement."

"When you see Walter," he resumed vaguely, completely ignoring my remarks, "you will no longer wonder at my partiality for the only son with whom God has ever blessed me. But there need be no regret on that subject. He is near his majority; and after that period, should he survive his relatives, Celia and Marcelline, he can bid defiance

(by some strange oversight, no doubt, on the part of the testator) to residuary legatees. Even if a cruel Providence should later cut short his life, he will have it in his power to delegate to others of his own race his power and property, who would wisely use it to rebuild the fallen fortunes of Beauseincourt. But no, he will not die!" he proceeded, waving his long arms, that reminded me when lifted of the sails of a windmill; and as if spellbound by his weird persistence, I sat in my chair and listened to his words with a kindling interest that I could not resist any more than I could account for it.

"No casualty shall ever occur to cut off his splendid existence, — his career of unmixed enjoyment. I feel this, a deeply seated conviction, or else could I never bear his absence. Besides, has it not been confirmed by experience and fact? Already shipwreck has spared him; the lightning shaft has passed him by to strike one dead at his side; a pistol-shot levelled at his heart by a mad sailor glanced from the case of his mother's miniature, and the ball fell to the ground harmless; fevers have left him unscathed, thrown off like water from a duck's back, by his perfect constitution, his unequalled organization, pure as that of a little child, unharmed by excess of any kind,— for he is a consistent gentleman, one of nature's noblemen. My Walter, young as he is, is a diamond without flaw.

"When you see my son, Miss Harz, you will understand for the first time in your life what the Greek ideal meant, and you know how fastidious was the standard of that people. You will see the live materials of which they made their demi-gods. No bookworms those, nor dreamers; but men in whose organization a perfect balance existed, of mind, matter, nerve, form, coloring, sense, — a combination so exquisite, that length of days as well as keen enjoyment of life was ensured by it to the utmost. This perfection of poise was what they typed as 'invulnerable' in Achilles, until the slight flaw in his heel (merely latent humanity this, of course!) was detected and taken advantage of; and thus he perished. My boy reminds me of Homer's heroes in their youth,— all strength, sweetness, courage, fire, simplicity; and you, too, will observe this antique air about him when you meet, — you, who observe, compare, discriminate, understand, and judge, as women seldom do."

I bowed only, in answer to this tirade, — or rather dropped my head.

"But a truce to compliment, commonplace ever, even if merited. Let me continue by drawing the reverse side of the picture — a repulsive one, I confess to me;" and he placed his hand across his brow and eyes, and spoke with drooping head as he continued his strange discourse, if it were not indeed a soliloquy.

"On the other hand, wise physicians, the same who doom the mother to early death, assign to the ignoble creature who stands between Walter and his heritage almost superhuman powers of vitality on the opposite principle: extremes approach each other in all cases. She, too, will live in her irresponsible and insensible condition, they affirm, if carefully cherished, to be old, old, — live as the toad lives, hermetically sealed in a rock, or the turtle in its cave, the oyster in its shell, if undisturbed, — live to be, as this new man Tennyson says, in his superb 'Locksley Hall,'

'Older than the many-wintered crow that leads the clanging rookery home.'

"What a line that is, to be sure! what an image! But let me proceed: all things embarrass, distract me," lifting his hand from his brow and extending it passionately, "live years — eventless, unmeaning to her—crushing, wearing, life-destroying to us! Unproductive of good to any human creature! I swear, there are times," looking at me suddenly, with his warped expression, "when I think it would be a righteous act to put aside this incubus, — put it aside in the most effectual way, you know!" waving his long, lithe hand towards the earth; "and if such a benefactor could be found, *could be found* — I say, such a benefactor to the race of Beauseincourt, I declare before God there is nothing that man could do, nothing that I could — but no, I do but jest," he interrupted himself suddenly, folding his arms tightly, as he caught my astonished eyes, and stopping in full flight — "jest bitterly enough, perhaps," he continued, "as Diogenes might have jested, when Alexander stood between him and his sunlight, merely to find out of what elements his visitor was made. On this principle, no doubt, was the famous utterance that has passed into an apothegm, — on this alone. They were the best friends afterwards, you remember, this Diogenes and King Alexander, which

proves this speech to have been a mere experiment if indeed, he had not a chill at the moment and spoke literally."

I sat frozen, confounded. Of what materials was this man composed, who could begin a sentence with a vehement suggestion of murder, and end it with a quaint dissertation on ancient history and an absurd travesty, — who could in one instant propose, the next disavow, — blow hot, blow cold, in the same breath, and play with passion as if it were his shuttlecock or soap-bubble? I sat in bewildered silence while he pursued his theme deliberately, discursively, after his own strange fashion.

"I have now set before you two lives," he said, elevating, as if to illustrate the fact, two long, straight, slender fingers of a delicate tawny hand before me. "Like Hamlet, I call you to look calmly on two pictures, between which the contrast lies, — a contrast even more forcible and appalling than that the Dane drew to his mother. The question is simply this," dropping his voice to a low, husky whisper, and literally wrapping himself in his own long, flexible arms, while he looked cautiously around the apartment, "*which* must prevail above the other, and *who* shall aid me to place the true prince upon his throne? Now don't mistake my suggestion for one minute: you are a perfect literalist, I find;" laughing derisively, as he spoke these words hurriedly. "The truth is, you will never understand me, Miss Harz; I am essentially a humorist; you will find this out later," seeing my frozen and repellent face, as I rose and stood before him, pale and sick with horror and indignation that I could not command, yet dared not find expression for, understanding him, as I did, far better than he could comprehend or would believe.

I held the clue in my hand to the central cell, where dwelt the Minotaur; and, from the ravings of fever and its involuntary revelations, had learned the horror of that inner chamber, else unsuspected. I knew the man before me better that hour than I knew him later, and shrank from his suggestions as though they contained the seeds of pestilence. Yet I felt that I must dissemble, even as I drew back from the pitfall at my feet, covered with green branches as it was, like the trap that deceives even the sagacious elephant to his doom.

"You are going away without a word," he observed, coldly: "my narrative, my suggestions have bored you."

"No, deeply interested me, on the contrary, Colonel Lavigne; but I am powerless to aid you, or counsel other than blind submission to the decrees of God. The remarks that offended you before, you would tolerate no better now; I deem it madness to contend with fate."

"Fate, indeed! That mysticism again, — that platitude, always uppermost in some minds! Ravaillac and Charlotte Cordé believed in fate, I suppose. A blind neeessity, infatuated fanatics that they were! But what can inexperienced young women, like you, know of a subject that has puzzled priests and philosophers from the beginning of time? Better put dreams of fate aside, and pin your faith to the skirts of expediency."

His coolness, his imperturbable audacity, confounded me.

"If I had the power, I would obliterate that word 'expediency' from the language," I said, impulsively and impressively, perhaps; reflecting, a moment later, that even then I was practising one of its precepts in my own person.

"Then you would do an injury to speech, but make no difference in act; for the roots of that quality lie deep in the exigencies of humanity, to which you alone, it seems, rise superior," with a profound, derisive bow, adding in the next moment, — a breathless one to me, — "you will find your quarter's salary in this sealed package, Miss Harz;" and he took it from the mantelpiece and presented it to me ceremoniously. "If you prefer it in coin, it is equally convenient to me, and perhaps would be best for you, as banks and bankers are so uncertain in these days. It is very little, I confess, for such services as yours, but all I can afford. I believe, by-the-bye, that is the supper-bell. I am sorry to have detained you from your toilet;" and again bowing formally, he said, in derisive accents, "Go when you will: the door is not locked this time."

"My toilet is made, Colonel Lavigne," I replied; "and, if you please, we can walk in side by side. This package, which I shall carry in my hand, will explain the mystery of our first appearance together in public, as well as our very last in private;" and I, too, bowed ceremoniously.

I said all this firmly and significantly. I was resolved never again to meet him without witnesses, as far as it lay in my power to avoid such interviews, and to obey no more his quarterly summons to attend him in his library, — his devilish, and so far unavailing, ruse.

I thought I saw very distinctly, now, that he was a monomaniac ; and this belief alone made me toleramt of his presence : but I was determined not to suffer my feet to be drawn in by the quicksand of his madness, to my own destruction or wickedness, one or both.

For days after these scenes, Colonel Lavigne ignored my very existence ; and I was inexpressibly relieved thereby. To gaze from afar at Bellevue became, for a time, my favorite recreation. I carried with me a small lorgnette I owned in my pocket to the schoolroom (the door of which was now secured, at my instance, by an internal bolt), and, through its medium, managed to bring pretty clearly before my eyes the enchanting house and grounds that had taken such hold of my imagination.

Major and Madame Favrand were absent, I knew, for the sake of her health, and the widow Weaver, who, since her husband's death, had continued by the will of Armand Lavigne to occupy a small tenement on the domain, kept house at Bellevue in their absence, and held guard over the poor imbecile. Thus the visit, that otherwise would have demanded a ceremonious return by this time, was still postponed. Yet one day I summoned courage to say to Madame Lavigne, —

" I should like to walk to Bellevue, if only to see the architectural details of that beautiful house more closely. Do you ever venture so far on foot? "

" Not now, Miriam, and especially in that direction. I cannot run the risk of encountering a sight of poor Marcelline, just now," coloring slightly. " Many months must pass before I can hazard another visit to Bellevue."

" I shall go over alone, then, some day, or with Marian and Madge, if they do not object to accompany me. Of course, under the circumstances, we will not set foot in the grounds."

" Wait, then, until Cousin Celia returns, and they shall go with you in the coach to return the formal visit she paid you. We always send her word first, you know, so that Marcelline may be kept out of the way. I should very much dislike to have my daughters get a glimpse even of that poor creature ; and the widow Weaver, though watchful enough, has little delicacy, I suppose, on the subject."

" Is the poor girl very repulsive, then? " I questioned.

" Don't ask me ! Oh, you cannot imagine, Miriam, what

a trial it is to behold her, — what a horror!" and she veiled her eyes momentarily, as I had seen Bertie do on a similar occasion.

"It is weakness to feel as I do, perhaps," she said, looking up again; "but I am, for some reasons, more than usually sensitive on this subject just now. Poor wretch! She is perfectly harmless, and I usually school myself to bear her presence when I am with Cousin Celia, who reveals her to me alone. This community of horror, so to speak, has been a great bond between us; for, with the exception of old Sabra, her devoted nurse, I am the only person permitted or courageous enough to behold her."

"Has she no perfect sense, or is intellect alone wanting? Does she know her friends?" I inquired.

"None but her parents and foster-mother. Attachments she has not, yet her senses themselves seem perfect. She hears, sees, smells, like other people; and her sense of taste is fastidious. She lives chiefly on fruits, and has her favorites among these. In their time she prefers melons, cantelopes especially; and, on this account, they are grown in hot-houses at Bellevue,— that is, when Major Favrand thinks of it. He is very careless and improvident in every way by nature, and often forgets for days together the very existence of Marcelline, whom he seldom beholds, and avoids sedulously; at which I cannot wonder, knowing him as I do — *and her*.

"By-the-bye, did ever I tell you that the shock Bertie received from seeing that poor creature very nearly endangered her life and reason? She has never entirely recovered from it, but has been nervous and wayward ever since. The circumstances were these: I will try and recite them to you briefly, though detail is my forte. One evening when Colonel Lavigne was absent with his gun, the cry went up among the negroes that the bear had broken loose, and had disappeared; and, as no one could control him but his master, it was thought useless to pursue him, until it was found Bertie, too, was missing. It was not her habit to wander off, and I felt all the more anxious about her on account of Mumbo's absence; so that half the negroes on the place were sent forth immediately in search of her and him.

"At the end of an hour Jura found Bertie lying quite insensible by the fence that divides Beauseincourt from Belle-

vue, with the bear deliberately mounting guard above her, or perhaps waiting his time to devour her. Our sagacious dog Ossian led the way; and King, assisted by his vigilance, brought the bear, while Jura bore Bertie all the way home in his arms, still partially unconscious.

"When she revived, the poor child was so frightened that her senses seemed perfectly bewildered. She insisted at first that she had dragged Jumbo herself by his dangling chain, all the way from the closed iron gate, of which the keys had been missing and forgotten for twenty years (it was locked to be opened no more soon after my marriage), to prevent him from destroying poor Marcelline, the unexpected sight of whom had doubtless entirely overwhelmed her. The doubt exists whether she ever saw the bear until he came towards her as she lay on the ground, confirming her swoon, probably, by the terror of his presence. And she herself arrived at the same conclusion, I suppose, when her reason was reëstablished, — which at first seemed entirely shaken, — for she gave up the point.

"To show you how completely she was under the dominion of delusion, she declared, in the beginning, that she had seen Marcelline Favrand in the front lawn, where she never goes, having an enclosed pleasure-ground with a high plank fence surrounding it set apart for her place of exercise, that the iron gate stood open, and that a man armed with a whip was trying to drive the bear inside of the enclosure through this gate, which the beast stubbornly refused to enter, running back and howling dismally. Finally, that turning to rush through the gate, she alleged she caught the chain hanging from his neck, and dragged him away; then fell, exhausted and frightened to death, hearing the gate slam to as she lay, unable to rise from excess of terror. And thus she was discovered. She did not see the man's face, it appears; but we suppose it was some strange negro, and from that hour to this, Bertie never has been able to bear or hear the subject mentioned or Marcelline alluded to. We think the whole delusion arose from her excessive horror at the sight of the poor idiot; for, as I said before, this is indescribable.

"She had gone out in pursuit of her father, it seems, to whom, by-the-bye, she had always been singularly attached, to give him his game-bag; but missed him, and returned by the way of Bellevue, and thus met with her disaster. Since then she has changed even to him."

"The poor wretch ought to have been placed in an asylum," I could not help saying, "I do not wonder that Major Favrand avoids her. It is cruel to sacrifice mind to matter in this way."

"Maternal instinct is a very mysterious thing, Miriam; and Cousin Celia possesses it in excess, perhaps, tender and sensitive as her nature is. It is better so, I suppose."

I smiled, as I accused myself, silently, of inconsistency, when I remembered the plea and parable I had offered to Colonel Lavigne in favor of such unfortunates on a previous occasion; but I only said,—

"You are right, no doubt, Madame Lavigne; I spoke without consideration. We must bear, I know, whatever cross God lays upon us; and the spirit in which this is done makes all the difference in our merits. No thanks to us for enduring the inevitable; but all praise to the being who displays at once a tender submission and noble fortitude. Of these, I well believe, are the 'elect'—God's chosen children."

Day by day, after this conversation, the wish to see Bellevue in my own way and at my own time strengthened within me. The leaves were falling away, now, from all deciduous trees, before the stride of winter,—instinctively, as it seemed to me; for as yet we had experienced nor cold nor frost worthy of the name, and the way through the intervening forest was at length plain before me, as was that of my purpose.

CHAPTER VI.

THE path I followed, by the direction of Uncle Jura, to gain the desired view of Bellevue, was one that seemed to be rarely travelled by man or beast, though nearer and more direct than the broad and beaten road that led from Beauseincourt. It was a narrow, devious way, marshy, and grass-grown in many places, and haply reptile-haunted. Yet for the once I traversed it alone, with no nobler object than the gratification of a morbid curiosity, no better companion than

a dog, the enormous and superb Newfoundland, Ossian, to which reference has already been made.

After pursuing this path for above a half a mile, through a dense, deciduous, moss-draped wood, now nearly stripped of its leafy screen, except where, brown and withered, as in the case of the beech and a few other forest-trees, the foliage still clung closely to the branches, I came suddenly upon the open, well-kept plantation road, that skirted for some distance the domain of Bellevue. Opposite to this was the iron gate of entrance, referred to by Madame Lavigne as that passway once opened by devoted brothers between the two estates, but closed irrevocably after the fatal rupture of Armand Lavigne and his nephew,—a gate which formed a central object in a lofty iron fence, securely planted on stone sills, enclosing the grounds in front of the mansion. Through this light and open arabesque of iron, the eye embraced every detail of the beautiful Italian villa (faced with white marble) and of its accessories. The fountain, thrown up from a convoluted shell of gigantic size and perfect workmanship, was truly the finest I have ever seen appertaining to a private establishment. It rose to a height of more than fifty feet, making a crystalline column in the air, before falling back into its basin of snowy white marble, so as to dash eternally in wreaths of foam above the group of nereids clustered around the shell, from the curling lips of which it seemed to be propelled with eternal murmurs.

Very fascinating to me was this Undine-like fountain, and this pure, white, dreamlike structure and its surroundings. I stood long observing it and its accessories with admiring eyes. There were ells with conservatories attached, and greenhouses stretched in glassy length to right and left. A high plank fence, such as is used for a circus enclosure, extended from the back of the mansion along the road, so as to shut out all farther view of the premises.

These grounds, no doubt, contained the pleasure gardens set apart for the poor Marcelline, who, not knowing her own name, still required one for the convenience of others,—grounds certainly as secluded as those a Turk would have selected for his harem.

It made my blood run cold in my veins to think of the horror that even now might lurk behind the lofty plank partition that divided them from the sight of the wayfarer. No one had ever described this creature to me; yet I pictured

her involuntarily with the usual accompaniment of lolling tongue and slavering lips and loose-jointed frame peculiar to such unfortunates, whose steps are purposeless and movements consequently ever uncouth. I had seen but few of these stricken creatures; but those had left on my mind an indelible impression of mingled compassion and disgust.

As I sauntered along the open wood that skirted this enclosure, now stooping to pluck an autumn flower still blooming amid the weeds, now avoiding the points of the formidable palmetto that projected from the sides of the road, and threatened to tear my dress and flesh, as the case might be, and all the while reflecting on the might of mother's love and its wonderful design, I saw Ossian bound away suddenly on the path before me, with a quick, joyous bark of recognition. In another moment he had claimed the unwilling acquaintance of some one concealed between a far-spreading cedar-tree and the fence, whence I heard a partridge call. Before I had gone many steps farther, somewhat to my annoyance, I confess, and greatly to my surprise, Colonel Lavigne, arrayed in his drab velveteen hunting-suit and bearing his gun in the hollow of his arm, stepped out from his place of concealment. I paused, undecided what to do; but he advanced towards me, thus precluding escape.

"Lying in ambush, you see, Miss Harz,—not for you, however, but a flock of birds that whirred up in this direction a few minutes since. My dogs are hunting them up for me; in the meantime I should be happy to point out the beauties of Bellevue to so distinguished a visitor." Again that ironical smile and disagreeable manner.

"I have already gazed my fill at this beautiful place, Colonel Lavigne, and must now be thinking of my return to Beauseincourt," I said, dryly, turning my face resolutely homewards. But of my remark he took no notice.

"Isn't it a splendid place, now, really? You can see it better here than from Mount Nebo; but you can still have no conception of all its attractiveness,—what lies concealed behind this fence, for instance," with a searching glance. "The land lies, most of it, however, at the foot of the hills, and is, compared to that of Beauseincourt (all in the hills, you know) for richness, as cream is to blue skimmed milk, or "Blue Jim," as you Northerners call that article,—*why*, I never could comprehend. But this domain is only

'a circumstance,' as you Yankees say, to the rest of the superb heritage it types." Here he shook his head dolefully. "I am beginning to come round to your opinions, though, and to believe that there is no use to make conditions with fate. Your Andrew Jacksons, Napoleon Bonapartes, Wellingtons, and the like, may, it is true, venture now and then to bid defiance to this rule, and kick the god of circumstance in the face, and send him howling; but a plain country gentleman like me," laughing bitterly, "can only 'grin and bear it,' as folks say in these parts, when the ague seizes them. See: I already begin to discriminate!

"But what is this? I have been so much absorbed that I have not noticed the signs of the coming storm. I thought — with a hazy atmosphere and lurid sun, like that above us, hanging like a ripe pumpkin in the heavens, rather than a divine luminary —we should have dry weather for a season, at least; but all signs fail in wet weather, and *that* tells me differently."

As he spoke he pointed significantly to the eddy of dust at our feet, and the witch-dance of leaves and twigs that in various eldritch circles was taking place around us; for I still stood where his words had arrested me when he commenced his erratic harangue about Bellevue, scarcely knowing how to break away from him, yet thirsting to be gone, and that right speedily.

"Come, Ossian," I said, as I looked at these precursors of a tempest, and heard the thunder lazily lumbering above our heads, "Come, let us go; we have little time to lose, it seems;" and I turned to depart.

"Wait a moment, Miss Harz," Colonel Lavigne enjoined, as he saw me setting forth. "You can never face this gust by yourself, if it proves to be what I apprehend; and on the score of responsibility alone, and as your host for the time, I insist on accompanying you. But first come here if you please, and put aside these branches for me, while I deposit my gun in the heart of this friendly cedar-tree, often before used as a repository of this kind, when I wanted to go home lighter than I came. That is right, — hold them boldly back. There is a bird in there, brooding upon her nest; but we will not startle her, poor thing. And as to the gun, no rain can reach it here in this epitome of Solomon's Temple. What a fine fragrance arises out of it! Do you perceive it?" snuffing it up eagerly. "How fresh it

is, how reviving! It is sweeter than priest's incense to my nostrils. Sip, the rascal, will know where to come for my gun after the storm is over. He is acquainted with my hiding-place, my armory. Now, let us be gone; but first your attention, one moment, if you please; and laying a light, yet strong and sudden grasp on the back of my bonneted head, he bent it forcibly down to a fissure in the fence, about a foot below the usual level of my eyes, and held it there firmly.

"The view would have been much finer seen from the crotch of the cedar-tree," he muttered; "but I knew I could never induce you to ascend it; you will therefore excuse me for giving you, thus unceremoniously, a glimpse of Paradise."

"Pray let me go, Colonel Lavigne," I cried, struggling against his inexorable hand; this is unmanly, ungenerous, ungentlemanly! You have no right to treat me with such indignity. You must not dare to repeat your former behavior."

"I mean no disrespect, as you will understand when you have seen the object of your morbid sympathy; in the meanwhile gaze on the precincts assigned to the princess Marcelline. Are they not very lovely? Say, have I disappointed you?"

And making the best of my situation, I replied, tremblingly, —

"Oh, no, not at all;" and my eyes swept in rapidly the panorama of lawn, grotto, pavilion, parterre, shrubbery, fish-pond and mimic bridge. "It is all very lovely, certainly; but this will never do. Think, — the storm!" vainly endeavoring to extricate myself by any stratagem, whatever, and confirmed in my belief of his mania. "We shall be caught in it, Colonel Lavigne."

"Well, let the storm take care of itself," he interrupted, "as I certainly shall of you; but continue to gaze until you have beheld the object of your chief attraction. You have not seen half, or you would not appear so unconcerned. I hope you do not find your attitude a painful or inconvenient one," courteously relaxing his hand slightly. In a few minutes I shall have the pleasure of releasing you altogether from the constraint of your position. In the meantime, look again; what do you see, Miss Harz? Philosopher, counsellor, female paragon and pedagogue, say, what do

you behold? No answer? The charm works slowly, it appears. Look closely, I beseech; like most imaginative women, you overshoot the mark, — your eyes out-travel sense. See there!" he whispered hoarsely, "beneath that Gloria Munda tree, not ten feet from the fence. Ha! what meets your inquiring gaze?" and he uttered again the long, low, thrilling call I had heard when first made aware of his presence.

A low shriek from my lips attested, a moment later, that the derisive design of the monomaniac (for such I now more than ever believed him to be) had succeeded.

Shocked, frightened, offended as I had been before, the horror I now felt paralyzed every other sensation.

"Help me, O God!" I cried, as I recoiled from the blasted cedar-tree, whilst a thousand arrowy points glanced through my quivering frame; and, as if in answer to my appeal, the near thunderbolt (simultaneous with the lightning shock that had fused gun and tree together, yet spared, as by a miracle, the creature so near to both) was launched above my head in hurtling power.

The shimmering light, as it played around us (for the heavens were dark, now, with one vast pall of clouds), revealed the stormy face of Colonel Lavigne. A face, as I have said before, like a convulsed mask (no other paradox of description can convey its peculiarity), so well suited to the scene of dismay and confusion that was soon to prevail.

"We will go to Bellevue for shelter: it is nearer than Beauseincourt," he muttered. "Come with me."

"Oh, not there! not there!" I cried wildly. To the woods sooner — anywhere else — never, never in any case to Bellevue, that hideous place!" and I veiled my eyes.

"Come, then," he said, persuasively, "let us compromise. Yield yourself to my guidance. Forgive me, and be firm, and we shall yet reach home before the height of the hurricane; but all depends on your self-possession."

Without another word we struck across the pasture that presented a more open way to Beauseincourt than the shorter one I had pursued thither, over which a road was already worn. By taking this route, we were required only to pass through a skirt of sparse woodland, instead of through the forest, desirable as it now was to avoid as much as possible the vicinity of trees, even if by lengthening our way.

Just as we struck this timbered space, and as if at the sig-

nal call of unseen demons, swiftly, and suddenly, too, as a tiger leaps upon his prey from his jungle-bed of leaves, uprose the gale. It came rushing, bounding almost visibly, before us; the angel of destruction inscrutably loosened upon the earth, lashing the trees to madness, bending, writhing, snapping and uprooting them like toy whips in the hands of giant children, mad with mischief, and whirling them, as if in savage and fierce contempt, across the open spaces. The air was thick with leaves driven on the breath of the blast, like flying hosts before a pursuing army, or like the "pestilence-stricken multitude" described by Shelley, "yellow and black and red," in his grand "Ode to the West-wind." Even then this parallel struck me.

A low, wild, continuous moaning, such as the sea makes when the tides are up, filled the darkened atmosphere; and now and then shrill, whistling sounds were heard, as though some mighty scourge were at work in the upper air, — that of Hecate herself, perhaps, — while the trees swayed and groaned like the masts of a straining vessel, or the "forest of suicides" in Dante's "Inferno."

The low bellowing of the thunder; the almost uninterrupted glare of lightning athwart the gloom; the wild, elfish dance of dust and leaves, as they eddied in our path like pillars of phantom mockery; the opening and closing of the red eye of wrath above us; and last, not least, the driving, continuous drenching, blinding, and almost torrent-like fall of rain that terminated the whole drama, made altogether an effect of power and terror that I have rarely seen equalled.

It had not been the habit of my life to shrink from storms. The electric fluid so potent in my veins had usually leaped with a wild allegiance to the voice of thunder, and I have not infrequently felt a consoling companionship in the wail of the surging gale, and the loosening of the rain-clouds, when my soul was stirred by sorrow or bowed with depression. But to-day I was crushed, subjugated, by the might of the outspoken tempest, met face to face in the presence of nature and in my own unsheltered helplessness.

It was now that Colonel Lavigne proved himself both willing and able, strong, valiant, and compassionate. He bore me literally along, unfit as I was to grapple with the emergency. Skilfully avoiding the dense woods, where the falling branches endangered life and limb, and making his

way swiftly and surely, without the loss of a moment, or one unnecessary step, through the rain that fell almost in a solid sheet, and against the driving hurricane, we came at last into a place of safety.

When we reached Beauseincourt, the nearest point for shelter after leaving Bellevue, the wind was already laid, and the rain was our only enemy. We entered the porch, where the servants thronged to meet us, drenched and exhausted, and then, with a few words of encouragement Colonel Lavigne turned me over to the tender mercies of Sylphy, and himself ascended to his wife's apartment. He had experience of her dread of thunder-storms, during the continuance of which she always insisted that he should remain beside her with her children, whom she called about her at such times, as a hen calls her brood, no matter what their employment might be or disinclination to leave it; as though she felt safety to abide in family community, or as if affection could shield her beloved ones from the hurtling arrows of heaven, if fate directed.

For me, the stranger in the house, as befitting, there was on this occasion the lonely, sheltered room and the quiet attendance of servants; thrice welcome now, for the sight that I had seen and the terrors I had encountered had shaken my brain temple to the centre, and made me averse to society. I craved, more than aught else, warmth, darkness, quiet, and my pillow; and, biding thus and there, I conjured up again the scene that I had witnessed.

Once more, in memory, I saw the old negro woman rise from the grass, gather up in haste her gay-colored patches, as she alternately glanced at the threatening clouds (muttering to herself, while stuffing her treasures in her work-basket), and at the small female figure neatly attired in white, sitting on a carpet mat beneath the trailing Gloria Munda branches, in an attitude of deep dejection. I remembered it was some moments before she succeeded in arousing this petite person, as she sat with her knees drawn up, her arms encircling these, her hands loosely locked across them, her face bowed down and concealed by the coarse, yellow hair that fell before her in thick, shaggy masses. This, surely was *not* Marcelline.

At last the figure stirred; and the head was lifted, not three strides distant from my own; and the unmistakable face glared horribly upon me. I groaned and shuddered as

I recalled its features, photographed on my brain in ineffaceable and sudden distinctness by the electric power of terror. Even as I write, I feel the strange recoil that chilled my blood for a moment, then hurled it back through my veins like living fire, as I saw that feline visage, with nothing human about it, save the white, doughlike flesh, sparsely overgrown with yellow, downy hair, and encountered the blinking, diagonally-set, greenish eyes, the fac-simile of which I had met before, glaring from behind the iron bars of a cage at a menagerie. The short and broadly planted nose, knobbed at the end; the low, flat, retreating forehead, from which the wiry hair rose fiercely, ridged in the middle, where it was carefully parted, and flowing around the shoulders in coarse and yellow profusion; the catlike eyes; the grisly mouth; the inhuman aspect, — were each and all unmistakably the attributes of a lioness. Never before was animal head so unmistakably placed upon human shoulders. It was like a ghastly dream of carnival. In another moment the creature sprang actively to its feet, dwarfed and stunted as it was in stature, and stood shaking its enormous head, on which the hair bristled visibly, while a shrill wail, or yell rather, burst from its cavernous throat, revealed by the casting open of the shapeless mouth (with its stunted tongue,) armed with sharp, divided teeth like those of a beast of prey.

Until then, horror had held me spellbound; but now the shriek was uttered that proved the will of my persecutor accomplished, and with the words, "What think you *now* of Marcelline, the heiress of Bellevue?" the implacable hand relaxed, and I was free again, in one sense, — free, but with an incubus of horror fastened for life upon my memory by the unrighteous tyranny of a monomaniac. Then my heart rose up, and accused its fate sternly, rebukingly.

"Why should I, who have sorrows enough of my own, have come to Beauseincourt, to taste of the bitter and loathly cup reserved for this strange family? Why should my happiness be compromised in their inconsistencies, or my being involved in the mazes of their devious ways? Had I not carefully, scrupulously, kept from them, in all possible fashions, every shadow of my own suffering, and performed my duty sternly, in the face of many misgivings of heart and brain, much faintness of mind and body both?

What order, what justice was there in such decrees? What humanity? Why was I punished thus?"

Such were the thoughts that crowded my throbbing brain in connection with the scenes of that day. The involuntary discoveries made in the past; the relentless persistence of a maniac, in the hollow of whose hand I seemed placed by my wayward destiny; and the fearful pursuing fate before me, — I would burst these ties, I determined then, in my desperation. Again I would cast myself on strangers, dear as many of the inmates of Beauseincourt were becoming to me. I would fly from those I loved, for the sake of the arch-fiend whose victim I was fast becoming, — whose warped moral sense was reflected at periods, as it seemed, in his very vision. I covered my face with my hands, to hide that evil aspect, returning so wildly in the silence of my chamber, — "that convulsed mask," as it had appeared to me, when the lurid light that seemed to flow from hell was streaming over it in the commencement of the tempest.

At last I slept. But when Bertie came to ask after me at supper-time, I was in a feverish stupor, she told me later, unable to respond to her kind inquiries. Before morning I was delirious; and my unconscious lips revealed, as hers had done before, the burden that oppressed me. I raved of Bellevue and of Marcelline; and the rumor of these ravings, through the agency of my attendants, failed not to reach the ears of those high in authority. Yet when Doctor Durand arrived at noon, all this was over, and the fever of a week had set in slowly and steadily.

From this phase, too, I recovered, but strangely weakened and spirit-broken. My proud resolve to leave Beauseincourt was gone, — dissolved in thin air by the ministry of angels. Never was convalescent so petted and spoiled. Fruits, flowers, jellies, fans, books, papers, pictures, fine perfumes, feminine gossip, all made a charmed atmosphere about me. Even Felicité and Sylphy and Jura and King vied with each other in offerings and attentions; and Uncle Jumbo sent me a fetich, consisting of a tiny gourd containing an alligator's tooth — never, I was assured, known to fail, if worn around the neck, to restore health and strength to the patient lingering under the ban of an "Obi." How did the poor old wretch surmise the truth?

Gratitude was beginning to overpower me, when Colonel Lavigne appeared, unbidden and unannounced, at my cham-

ber door and dispelled the whole illusion. Nothing his family had done, or could do, I felt, would repay me for the burden he had placed upon me, — the cruel indignity of his behavior, reckless of all save selfish gratification. I received him stiffly, and had he asked for an interview, should not have granted it at all; and this he had surmised, probably, for he had chosen a moment when he knew he should find me alone, in order to make his "amende," such as it proved to be,— and which was only an additional proof of his selfish indifference to all save his own interests.

But this very devotion to expedience was in itself undeniably a startling instance of reason. I was obliged to own that even if mad, "there was method in his madness," and from that hour found myself reluctantly, yet surely, retiring more and more each day from the idea that had at first charitably possessed me, of his mania, until I came to believe him at last only a sophist, — that worst of all miserable lunatics, perhaps, rightly considered.

As I have said, my reception of my host and visitor was not a gracious one. I was sitting, as I remember, on that lovely autumn day, in a deep chair, near the open door, that gave on the porch, inhaling with a new delight the fragrance of the still luxuriant and perennially blooming Augusta rose that climbed around it, when the tall form of Colonel Lavigne suddenly appeared before me, darkening the whole chamber to my eyes. He had approached very noiselessly, as was not his custom; for his usual step was solemn rather than stealthy. He now came forward with his hand extended, and the smile of a recognized friend; having chosen, it seemed, to forget, or ignore altogether, my displeasure.

"You are better, I see," taking my nerveless hand in his, for a moment, for I did not extend it to him, "almost well, Durand tells me, though he never considered you in the slightest danger. In our climate every wetting is followed by fever, — to the stranger, at least. We Southrons don't mind exposure to sun or storm. I, for instance, am a man of leather."

"Queer," in two senses, I thought, punning, silently, on the French word "Cuire," which he had thus applied to himself, though in a different tongue. I smiled at my own thoughts, and he went on, encouraged, no doubt, by my apparent good nature.

"I am really sorry for your indisposition, and we are all glad to see you better. You are a great favorite at Beauseincourt already; but you have not yet seen the person whose favor it is most worth while to covet."

Again I faintly smiled, but made no reply. Thus encouraged, he continued,—

"Well, well, it is of no use discussing impossibilities. But you have seen yourself what a monster she is, and how monstrous are those previsions."

"O Colonel Lavigne," I cried impulsively, "spare me on that subject in future, I beg! It makes me ill but to think of her; and in such relation must recur ever your very unwarrantable conduct. I must entreat, in future, from all this, complete exemption. Remember! I am the merest stranger in your house. I"—

I leaned back, faint and exhausted, unable to conclude the sentence on my lips; and waved my hands merely, in pantomimic conclusion.

"Here, sniff this aromatic stuff," he suggested, taking my vinaigrette from the stand beside me, and smiling grimly as I accepted and used it gratefully.

"You must not be so nervous, or I shall lose my faith in your strength of character. You may be intended, for aught you know to the contrary, to carry out some great work yet, — some good to mankind."

"Oh, never, never! All that I ask is peaceful mediocrity, and to be let absolutely *alone*."

"Besides that," he continued, as though he had not heard me, — as perhaps he had not, being one of those self-absorbed men, who conduct conversation on one-sided principles, to use a Fenianism, — "besides that, you will postpone your recovery indefinitely, — which is a very long time, you know," smiling quaintly. "By the bye," with startling abruptness, "I hope you have not compromised me at all, in the statements you have been making with regard to this new discovery of yours."

"I am not responsible, Colonel Lavigne, for what I may have uttered in delirium, and I do not admit for one moment that any confidence exists, or can exist between us. You promised when I agreed to come here, that we two should 'have very little indeed to do with one another.' I recall your exact words, and demand their strict fulfilment."

Again I leaned back exhausted.

"Quite a long speech for a delicate young lady to make: and, what is more, quite a fiery one for certain conditions; but I pass all that over for the present. You will be tamed by and by; I have a faculty for subjugating wild animals, — bears, lions, and the like. But time and patience are required," he mused, smiling sardonically. "Like yourself, I hate wild beasts, Miss Harz. I prefer 'L'animale apprivoiseé,' — don't you? See Mumbo, for instance. He was perfectly ferocious as a cub; look at him now, — as mild as a sucking dove. You will see him some day, no doubt, standing on the porch, with his paws on your window-sill, lolling his tongue at you like a Japanese exquisite."

"That day would terminate our acquaintance, Colonel Lavigne, if not my existence. I have no confidence in your bear, I must acknowledge, — am very much afraid of him, and convinced that he will destroy you yet, if you do not anticipate him in the work of destruction. He is a monster that, I insist upon it, shall be kept away from me."

"Then you really dislike my Mumbo almost as much as his master? What an unreasonable young person you are! You do not know your best friends, it seems. When a woman has your enterprise, your spirit" —

"Colonel Lavigne," I interrupted, "I beg that this trifling may cease. I am ill, distressed, — in your own house, and in one sense at your mercy. If you are a gentleman, withdraw and leave me to the enjoyment of my solitude, all that I ask at your hands. Should such annoyance be renewed, however my interests might suffer, we must part; and I hope, to a man of generous feelings, this view of the subject will be irresistible. I am comparatively happy here, and try to do my duty; I should find it inconvenient, and, for some reasons, painful, to throw up my engagement suddenly; but all must yield to a sense of what I owe myself. Go, now, I entreat you, and come to me no more."

"Your wishes shall be respected," he said, turning away with a sudden resumption of his dignity. "Forget, if you please, that I have ever harassed you in any way. You are a good girl, I believe, but more commonplace than I had supposed you. But again, as your employer this time, let me charge you, as far as I am concerned, to be discreet." And he glanced a menace at me. "You will find it your

best policy." So saying, he departed, and again I breathed freely.

A moment after Colonel Lavigne had left my room, Bertie stole quietly in, looking as pale as ashes, with blazing eyes.

"I have heard everything," she said, "everything, from the first to the last word, and purposely too. I followed him to learn his errand. Oh! that man, that man! you begin to know him now."

"But, Bertie, to listen surreptitiously! How mean, — how degrading! What could have induced you to so far forget your self-respect?"

"He is my father, and, in spite of all, still dear to me," she said, clasping her hands, while large tears rolled down her face. "You cannot understand why I consider it my duty to watch over him thus; and your welfare, too, is precious to me as my own life, dearer than my honor, even," pressing her hands, still clasped together, above her heart. "And you know what that is to a Southern lady, — a Lavigne. He took you to see that horrible sight, that is plain, for some purpose or other that he has not yet developed, no good one, I well understand; and he has been here trying to smooth it all over again. That is the way boa constrictors do, you know, when about to swallow their victims. They slime and slime, then break all their bones at a crush; and, when once reduced to a jelly, down they go at a gulp. Now don't suffer yourself to be slimed, and jellified, and swallowed up, Miss Harz. Don't have anything to do with that man and his affairs. As to Walter, he is only the gilded hook for 'the silly fish now playing in the brook.'

"There, now, I have spoken very plainly; but you would not think hard of me if you knew all, — as you never can, — nor judge my eavesdropping on common principles. But mother! Don't let her know, I entreat" — and she came and knelt by my side — "that *he* took you to Bellevue. It would nearly kill her, it would, indeed, and set her poor brain to working; and, as she could never make out the truth, it might breed mischief between you two, who love each other so dearly now. But you ought not to have gone to see Marcelline in such company, Miriam Monfort. You ought not, indeed, for your own sake."

I started at the sudden application of my name. It seemed a delicate menace, — a reminder that she held in her hand the clues to more than one mystery.

"It is due to myself, as well as to him, to declare to you, Bertie, — and you may so tell your mother should she question you on the subject, — that I went alone to Bellevue, impelled solely by a wish to see the place, and that Uncle Jura pointed out to me a near and private pathway through the forest. The dog Ossian was my only escort. I met your father accidentally at the fence, where he compelled me, I confess, to look at 'Marcelline,' if, indeed, a human name befit so monstrous a creation. He brought me back, however, kindly and safely, through the dreadful storm, in which, otherwise, I might have perished. So far I thank him. My only cause of offence against Colonel Lavigne, lies in his wanton disregard of my feelings on the occasion of this compulsory violation of Madame Favrand's mystery, — one which I never should have sought to penetrate, and shall regret the knowledge of eternally."

"Oh, yes! I understand that," she said, shuddering; "and I believe every word you have spoken, and so will mother. You are truth itself, Miriam Monfort," kissing my hand rapturously. "I felt that from the first."

"But, my dear, dear girl, why call me by a name that for a season I have thought it best to lay aside? It is unworthy of you, I feel, to take this advantage. When I am ready, believe me, all will be proven fair to every one who honors me now with love and confidence."

"Yes, yes, that is all we can expect, certainly. I wish, though, mother's misgivings could be set at rest."

"Your own, you mean, Bertie. I am sure your mother has no misgivings on the subject of my honorable past. But I cannot gratify your curiosity yet, my child, true daughter of Eve that you are."

"Oh, I suppose we have met in some former state of existence," she said, carelessly, "and that accounts for the interest I feel in you, — unaccountable as it otherwise is, — in you and your stupid history. I have a remembrance of just such a scene as this, enacted a thousand years ago," she said, suddenly shading her eyes with her hand. "Where could we have been then, I wonder? In Saturn himself, perhaps, — God knows, — or may be on this earth, in Persia or in Egypt or Rome. Well, well! we shall know everything after a while, and that is one comfort in death. But how strange these sudden glimpses are, which we catch every now and then, of something that is past or yet to

come," and she looked up at me solemnly, "as if it were through the green curtain of the performance beyond! The very sight of the feet underneath, you know, has something thrilling."

"You must have been reading 'Scipio's Dream,' Bertie, to account for such imaginings."

"No, no, I never heard of it, even; but, ever since I could think and feel, I have believed that I have lived from the very beginning of time, in some state of being. I feel so old here!" laying her hand upon her breast. "There is very little if any difference in ages, you see, when you think of our immense number of eons in another stage of existence. I am as old, in one sense, as father or mother either. What signifies a few years, more or less, on this dreary, little, circumscribed earth of ours? All depends on experience, at last."

Had I known less certainly, to what she referred, I might have marvelled to see the cold, bleak shadow that stole across her face, and smiled to observe the calmness of her folded hands and quiet attitude, as it seemed in self-poised confidence of her right to claim the privilege alone assigned to years usually,—the grave and questionable prerogative called experience, the dreariest of disenchanters.

But I looked upon her as she sat, with tender and pitying eyes, and feelings half reverential in their character. In her time of bloom and blossom, of bee and sunshine, the blight had fallen usually reserved for those who have lived through the summer of existence, and passed, by slow degrees and natural changes, into the realm of frost.

"I was born under Mars," she said, after a pause; "and a soothsayer prophesies that I shall die on the battle-field, 'red and gory:'* so destiny shuts me out from my favorite dream of a desert island with plenty of grapes and books, and goats like Robinson Crusoe's. Wouldn't you like to live with me there, dear Miriam Monfort?"

* A prophecy since strangely verified.

CHAPTER VII.

"SO you caught the lion's impress the moment you beheld poor Marcelline?" said Madame Lavigne to me a few days later. "Bertie has been telling me that you saw her through a fissure in the fence, which I sent Jura over immediately to find out and stop up. Cousin Celia would be greatly concerned, did she know such a place of observation open to every passer-by. The neighbors frequently make use of that road, when it shortens their journeys, and it would be a matter of grave offence to hinder them. Yet this universal custom has its inconveniences. Isn't she a horrible monstrosity, Miriam?"

"Oh, fearful! But I should suppose habit would by this time have reconciled you to think of her without a revolting shudder. What a constant trouble the vicinity of this horror must have been to you."

"When I had a rapid succession of children, I avoided the place on principle, lest the lion race should have been perpetuated at Beauseincourt. Now, after the lapse of years, I have the same reason," she hesitated, "for doing so again. Cousin Celia knows this, so that she is not wounded at my withdrawal from her house. Her own misfortune renders me doubly careful. You understand me now, Miriam."

"Is old Felicité's story then true?" I asked.

"I know not what she told you, but the simple truth is this: Major Favrand was always a picture fancier, and when, soon after their marriage, Cousin Celia was summoned to Bellevue, on account of the sudden illness of her father, he purchased, during her absence, an enormous picture of a lion-hunt, to adorn their house in Charleston. They lived there then, in their happy marriage estate.

"Cousin Celia returned home unexpectedly, having found her father on the road to recovery. She took a carriage at the wharf, drove to her own house, and entered the front door, which she found unlocked, without ringing the bell or

calling the servants. The drawing-room door was opposite to this. It was a long, lateral room, in which were many windows, all closed but one: before this, open above, the newly purchased picture was placed on the floor until it could be determined where it could be advantageously hung.

"The principal figure on the canvas was an immense lion in the foreground, crouching for a spring, on which the light from the window streamed, so as to give it a lifelike appearance, and throw the groups beyond into deep shadow. Nervous, weary, and dispirited as she was at not meeting her husband, as she had hoped to do, with her carriage in attendance at the landing, — there had been some mistake, it seems, about the hour, — and anxious, in consequence, as young wives are apt to be, to find him in the house, — she threw open the drawing-room door impatiently, having first closed that of entrance, and found herself face to face with an escaped menagerie monster, as she imagined, without hope of retreat. The last thing she remembered or imagined, was (so fearfully was she excited) hearing it roar, as she fell swooning on the floor. There Major Favrand found her, still insensible, an hour later, when he came home, for the servants were still unconscious of her return. A few months later he had cause to rue the purchase of that fatal picture."

"Such things have always seemed to me old wives' stories until now," I said, much impressed by the horror of this relation, and the strange injustice it seemed to shadow forth. "Why was not the monster taken away before its mother saw it, and consigned to other hands; then other children might have crowned her hearth, or she might still have been happy in her husband's love alone, and the power her wealth confers?" I asked eagerly.

"Because things were mismanaged in the beginning, as was also Cousin Celia, I fear, for her health has been declining ever since, and she has had no more children. Soon after this, that strange enmity arose on her father's part against my husband, which determined the old man, hopeless of another direct heir, to preserve by every artifice in his power, the life of this imbecile, merely to thwart his nephew. The feelings of a mother were of course too strong in Cousin Celia's case to admit of any motive being assigned to her other than maternal instinct, but even she could never bring herself to the task of nourishing her own offspring; this

devolved on Sabra. You know it is our Southern custom to have assistance of this kind in rearing our children; but we never yield the office of maternity entirely to another, if we can help it, as she did voluntarily. Sabra has been her chief aid and consolation in the care of this wretched being, and has proved herself invaluable to her mistress, who lavishes upon her indulgences of every kind save one. The poor creature is hopelessly pinned down to the side of Marcelline, and was forced to abandon her own children to the care of others in order to fulfil this duty. Yet, so far as can be judged, she has done this willingly for the sake of her mistress, whom she worships. Yet in order to obtain some variety and excitement, I suppose, so necessary to creatures of her race, the poor wretch drinks immoderately at times, and Cousin Celia fears will be forced to give up her charge if she does not reform, which, as Marcelline knows and obeys her only, would involve great discomfort to her mother."

"All this is very dreadful, but perhaps you have already pursued this subject too far; think of your own welfare, now, and hope that the good sense of mankind will some day set aside the unjust entail of Armand Lavigne. Surely, no Chancellor, at her parent's death, would decree to such a being more than a support and an asylum."

"This has all been investigated duly, in anticipation of what must be," she rejoined; "for the life of Cousin Celia hangs on a hair. She has some organic disorder which involves her heart; and life is only prolonged by constant care and the tender attentions of that inconsistent being, her husband, to whom she is blindly devoted."

"So far she is happy, let us trust," I remarked.

"No, Miriam," she pursued, unheeding my rejoinder, "there was no device omitted by that wily old man to surround his will with meshes of indissoluble strength in the eyes of the law, yet he never breathed his intention. To the last, although a coolness between them had existed for some time, my husband believed that the strong love of Armand Lavigne for his brother Roger, to whom he had promised on his dying-bed an equitable division between their children, would prevail over capricious displeasure. For with the sole exception of having one day said in his uncle's presence, that the 'French physicians were right in destroying monsters at their birth,' he was unconscious of having given any grounds of offence. Even after this speech, which the

old man passionately resented at the moment, they dined together once or twice, and met politely in the houses of mutual friends.

"During the existence of this coolness, Armand Lavigne sent me a present of pearls of great size and beauty, and a purse containing a hundred gold doubloons, which I squandered freely, supposing in due time that more would come. This was the last money of his, however, that was ever destined to cross a palm in Beauseincourt, unless our son should succeed! I should not complain if Walter were to inherit, though it seemed so insulting even for this purpose to reach a hand over my husband's honorable head. But this is not to be: I see and feel that Marcelline will survive us all, and poverty is our portion. Indeed, my dear Miriam, Colonel Lavigne has never been the same man since that iniquitous testament was read to him, — calculated, if ever will was, to build up enmity between the Favrands and ourselves. But this we will not permit, nor will they. We are still on friendly terms, and shall remain so, if only for good blood's sake, though from neither of them could we ever ask or accept a pecuniary favor.

"Sometimes I think it was because of Colonel Lavigne's lukewarm conduct to Cousin Celia, that the old man bore him this grudge; and that his anger about Marcelline was all a subterfuge. But none can tell what rankled in his heart. Had he only paid our debts, we might have borne it better; but then, as now, Beauseincourt was involved almost hopelessly, I fear, though we have struggled on, so far, with a millstone about our necks. God alone knows what the termination is to be. If cotton could stand steadily at ten cents a pound, the planters could all look up, and the heel of the commission merchant be lifted from their necks. As it is we work only for a support for ourselves and negroes, and to enrich the brokers.

"When I married Colonel Lavigne, I had the hope of fortune. But in the disastrous year of '37, my father died, and all he had was swept away in the financial flood; so I have never had the happiness to aid my husband to redeem his estates as I looked forward to doing, and as my father would have done, had he survived, with his energies and position. We have never even been able to repair and refurnish this house, for which purpose I would gladly economize. But Colonel Lavigne will not hear of table

retrenchment, and I can practise no other so advantageously. Our dress is simple enough, and we entertain but little. How, then, can I systematize matters?"

"Cut the Gordian knot at once, dear Madame Lavigne, or ruin will ensue; and, for the sake of your daughters, avoid that abyss. I gave you this counsel before, — forgive me if I repeat it, inexperienced as I am, — Leave Beauseincourt."

"What! sell our land and negroes?"

"If you do not, others will. What else remains? A good house might be purchased for a tithe of the amount, an income vested and debt paid with the remainder; then you would all be free from bondage."

She shook her head sadly.

"You are slaves now," I continued, "indisputably, to your negroes and creditors, and consumed by that relentless fury, anxiety."

"None but a Northern woman could give such advice, Miriam," Madame Lavigne replied. "It would seem a strange proceeding to Southern eyes, and Colonel Lavigne would shrink from it with horror; and, you know, there is suicide in the family."

"The suicidal policy is the one you are now pursuing, it seems to me," I answered. "For your husband's sake, any change would be a godsend. As to your son, waste no regets on him. In his profession, fortune is a superfluity. The naval officer needs only his sword and his ship. No class is, or can be, half so independent of factitious circumstances. Walter Lavigne is provided for; think only of yourselves."

"Why, my dear Miriam, I cannot even venture on a suggestion: I am not organized like you (a touch of kindly satire here, I could but feel), to work revolutions. After a lifetime of submission, first to my father, next to my husband, I could not commence now to oppose the head of the house. And surely his kindness, affection, fidelity, all claim from me the only tribute in my power, — coincidence with his will."

So spoke the constant, self-sacrificing wife, and I was silenced by these words of virtue. It was not for me, a stranger in their gates, to cast the apple of discord between this pair. Their doom was fixed, I knew; and I gazed with sad, compassionate eyes into the far vista of sorrow and

poverty that lay before them, if persistence in their present course were adhered to. Six helpless Southern women turned adrift, or crushed by the humiliation of dependence! God help all such, I pray, now and evermore!

It is a strange mystery to me, this entire difference of races, united in government alone, — a problem that must resolve itself some day, I fear, in dissension and bloodshed. God grant that I may not live to see that time, of which nullification is but the entering wedge, and Calhoun the Southern type, — the day that is still to dawn in storm and horror!

* * * * *

"Bertie," I said one day, not long after this unprofitable conversation, which seemed for a season to throw a slight barrier of reserve between Madame Lavigne and myself, "Bertie, if I were you, I would try and discipline my mind a little more, in view of what may happen. A good friend of mine gave me this advice once when my prosperity seemed as indestructible as yours does now, and I thank him for it, to this hour; it shaped my life. Had I not laid Mr. Gerald Stanbury's counsel to heart, I should not now be here teaching your 'young ideas how to shoot.'"

"Or not to shoot, rather," she answered, readily. "You know you disapprove of the use of the long-bow."

"Your arrow is always on the string, Bertie, for a rencounter. But listen to me seriously."

"Well, I listen," composing herself into a ludicrously prim attitude, and twirling her thumbs: "preach, Miriam Monfort, as long as you have a mind or a vocation. Now begin, — Firstly."

"No, Bertie, not while you mock me; 'Levity is the devil's favorite sin,' some author says, — a wise one, whoever he may be. Beware of its indulgence, thoughtless child."

"Believe me," she said, dropping her pert demeanor as quickly as she had assumed it, and standing with folded arms before me, while her cheek flushed at my rebuke, and her haughty eye flashed fire (that Huguenot blood of hers was as ready to blaze as spirits of wine); "believe me, Miss Harz, that whatever may betide, I shall never emulate a Yankee 'schoolmarm:' no, I would stand in a store first in Broadway, or go on the stage, like noble Fanny Kemble. Do not think, because your vocation is a miserable one, you can

recommend it to others. I would rather be a vivandiere at once, in a Calhoun regiment, and help to kill Yankees, than shut myself up in a monastic solitude like this, to teach Huguenot owls, and grow to look like one myself."

"I thought you liked your home, Bertie," I said, quietly; "I thought you respected me, yourself, your family."

She had made ready for battle, and my tone disappointed her. She stood uncertain how to proceed, I saw. I calmly took a book, and busied myself in its pages. By and by, I heard her sobbing passionately. I turned to her quietly.

"My dear girl, what is the matter?" I inquired. "What can possess you? Your conduct seems unreasonable to me."

Still the low, passionate weeping.

"Bertie, this will never do; come here to me, dear child;" and I laid my book open on the table. She came and knelt beside me, burying her face in my lap.

"You are so cross," she said, at last, sobbing convulsively,— "such a cross—cross — cat," still sobbing between her words, "I can't endure you lately; I don't believe I ever" —

"Bertie!" rebukingly.

"Well, I will not say another word. Are you satisfied now, tyrant?" and, before I could anticipate her intention, she rose and threw herself on my neck, pressing me closely in her arms. Such inconsistency!

"Have mercy on my clean collar, Bertie."

Those careless words avenged me. She saw how extravagant I thought her conduct from first to last, and sat down pacified and ashamed, wanting my sympathy.

"I shall live at the Refuge, with Walter," she observed, in a low tone, after a pause, during which she sat sullenly on a trunk, and I resumed my book. "If the worst comes, I too shall be a cross old maid, and I will keep house for him when he gets his own."

"His own will be a ship, Bertie, and you are very young to make such rash promises," speaking above my book, without raising my eyes from its pages.

"Not rash at all, — only sensible. Mother thinks I was 'born to make somebody miserable:' I heard her say so to father one night when I was put to bed, supperless, in the trundle, by order of old Doremus, and they thought me fast asleep. From that hour I resolved to thwart my destiny,

if possible, and spare 'somebody' his dose of misery; and so I will imitate your example, and be a spiteful old maid, and make myself as disagreeable as possible, — a sort of amber-witch."

"You will not find the last difficult, Bertie."

"Nor the first either, you think?" she said sharply. "Who so mad as to come wooing to one of the five sisters of York? Dickens was painting us when he wrote that tale."

No answer to this pathetic question, finding which, she continued, after a pause, —

"Most Yankee teachers who come to the South expect to get married; but some are grievously disappointed. In the first place," touching one forefinger with the other, "a woman who secures a husband under such circumstances must be good-looking — moderately so at least — and — and — a Christian; in the second place," still counting on her fingers, "good-tempered; in the third place, tolerably smart. I feel sorry for those that are neither of these, and have to abide in solitude forever."

Here she groaned sympathizingly, and clasped her hands.

"If Doctor Durand were single, now, there might be some hope, he is such a soft-hearted, gentle old gander; but I can't for the life of me think of any one else who would venture on such a hazardous step. Can you, Miss Harz?" laying her finger on her lip; then, after a pause, suddenly advancing towards me with extended hands and smiling eyes.

"What were you saying, Bertie?" looking up coldly.

"Oh, you heard well enough, you know you did; and you are not such a goddess as you think yourself, because you have one poor, forlorn, little female worshipper." Kneeling down, and taking my hands in hers, "Come, let's make up; I can't endure this one moment longer. Kiss me yourself this time; I am afraid of the immaculate collar," clasping her hands behind her. "Nothing but a little strip of white muslin, after all, — not much to rumple. But what are you reading?" as I stooped, and kissed her brow coldly, *severely*, even. "Telemachus, as I live, — which you know by heart already. Oh, what a humbug you are, sweet Miriam Monfort!"

A shower of kisses from dewy lips belied these censorious words, which I could not foresee well enough to resist, but did not return.

"Bertie, life is too short to be trifled with in this way," I said, as I held her at arm's length, reprovingly. "Youth is evanescent; yours will go by like an unprofitable dream, I fear. Do, my dear child, give more thought to your improvement; your arithmetic, for instance, is sadly neglected."

I can do all those sums in my head: what is the use of ciphering them out?" she said, dropping her head.

"But, Bertie, that is the only way to understand the subject. Suppose you had to manage complex affairs: what would you do without an accurate knowledge of figures?" I meant to be very trite, very practical.

"Well, I will try to do better in this respect,—just to please you, remember," she rejoined, meekly, with downcast eyes, "as I never expect nor intend to manage complex affairs."

"Thank you, my dear. And your French exercises?"

"Oh, bother!" she broke forth, at last, "I hate that gibberish, anyhow,—the native tongue of Henry IV. Set me to Italian, and I will astonish you. I adore the Medicis, old Catharine and all, and their language will come easy."

"Child, you are incorrigible."

"Mistress, I have my moods as well as tenses;" and she made me a quaint curtsy.

"With which you seek to cover all offences," I improvised, in turn smiling. "That will do; the conference is ended, Bertie. But I hope the lessons will be well prepared to-morrow. Now go, and bury yourself in the 'Old Curiosity Shop,' if you choose, and dream of little Nell, that childish paragon, whom you so wilfully dub a puppet."

By and by she returned, eager and panting.

"Oh, come down stairs, Miss Harz! Mother says you *must*. There is a new man, a Mr. Gregory, and also a Mr. McChesney, that looks just like a Cheshire cat. Mr. Gregory is very striking indeed, but a little hateful and not handsome. However, Alice Durand says he is so agreeable and witty! They came on horseback, of course to stay all night. Mrs. Durand and the Doctor are behind them in their gig, lined with red flannel, specked with black sandflies, (aren't you happy now?) The pattern came over on the ark. The old lady has come to observe, so be on your good behavior, and don't flirt. Do put on your dark-blue chally dress and rose-colored bow; it is so very becoming

to your gypsy-queen style of *hideousness!*" with a carol of laughter. "There, now, that was only a 'Roland for an Oliver.' I am going to send Sylphy. Don't disappoint me about your appearance. I have been boasting; and they may think me a Gascon, instead of a Georgian, if you belie my words. But you won't put me to shame, I know;" and away she bounded again, to return before many minutes had elapsed, to hasten my toilet, and perhaps inspect it.

I found Mr. McChesney just as I expected to see him. He had teeth "a la Carker," and showed them continually; and Bertie had described him pretty well when she said, "I do believe he is the original 'Chessy cat.' He was an unsuspicious, fat-hearted Englishman, travelling to observe the country and its inhabitants, and said, "Dear me!" "Bleth my thoul!" and "You don't thay tho!" in strict rotation, which may give some idea of his conversational facilities. In addition to his thick, lisping enunciation, and extreme nearsightedness, his face was dull, his appetite large, his credulity great; and there was nothing else remarkable about him except the size of his feet and whiskers. He took very decidedly to Madge; and, as Marion was indisposed, Mr. Gregory became for the time my property and easy prey. "God save the mark!" Think of a pigeon preying upon a falcon, for illustration.

Mr. Gregory had travelled extensively, and remembered well. He had a fund of anecdote, a pleasant voice, a ready wit, a changeable physiognomy, though, as Bertie had said, "not handsome," a graceful figure, and lithe, expressive hands, which seemed at times to be boneless, so completely did he command them to subjection.

I defer further description, as in truth at the time I made no profound examination either mentally or physically of a person who plays no unimportant part in this Retrospect. I found the following entry in my diary of that evening. Let it pass for what it proves itself to be worth. Of this my reader must be the final judge.

"Let me see whether or not my first impressions of Mr. Gregory are to be confirmed; for I shall, doubtless, have opportunities of knowing him better, since he has come to remain some time in the neighborhood. He is to meet here, it seems, the chief engineer of our contemplated county road, in sage consultation as to expense, direction, etc. Colonel Lavigne is elated with the prospect. But to return

to Mr. Gregory, who bears the apostolic name of "Luke," a name I never fancied, notwithstanding its holy associations. I do not like his conical head, running up to such a point of self-esteem, then falling rapidly towards the brow, which is so wide and low that it looks like a stripe, beneath his jet-black hair, full to bursting as it is of brains evidently in the intellectual regions. He has, however, neither ideality nor reverence according to the laws of phrenology. What nonsense! I am playing out the farce of Colonel Lavigne, at the Mansion House, when he bade me remove my bonnet, and show my bumps. I am criticizing this stranger unfairly perhaps. Yet if Mr. Gregory is a good man, phrenology is at fault. I do not like his Chinese eyes, either, that close when he laughs; so black and piercing at other times; soft and languishing, too, I find, when he chooses, — an odious expression, always, to me, from association, perhaps. And I do not like his flexile hands, that flap about so constantly; nor the habit he has of sticking out his long, straight leg and so admiringly contemplating his well-clad foot. There is something strange about his feet, certainly; but what it is I cannot yet make out. They are probably as supple as his singular hands. Most persons would call them "elegant extremities;" to me they are not pleasing. I like firmer looking pedestals for a man to poise himself upon, and am no friend to foppish hands or finical feet.

"Bertie observed us closely while we talked. I was glad to break away at last from her surveillance, and go to Mrs. Durand, a stranger to me, hitherto, with a kind and benevolent face, and who evidently suits the doctor exactly. I find their daughter, Alice, very pretty, though somewhat inane. Madge looked well this evening; Bertie, plainer than I ever saw her. Why will she persist in wearing that long-sleeved, loose bombazine apron on all occasions? It hides her pretty figure completely, and makes her look a perfect dowd. Yet how sweet is her unconsciousness of self!"

So stands recorded my prophecy about Gregory; or my foreboding, rather, destined perhaps to be dissipated (who knows?) like the frost of morning in the noonday sun of a larger experience.

On the following morning Marion appeared on the scene, in her serene, unconscious beauty; and I found myself

deserted by Mr. Gregory, for the time being, notwithstanding the entire indifference manifested by the object of his assiduities to his society. As to Madge, who was much the brighter of the two, and who from the first admired him conspicuously, he ignored her completely during his stay of three days, but returned to his first allegiance before he left Beauseincourt. I was lenient, not having interest enough in the property in question to be resentful. I received him kindly back again, which probably piqued his "amour propre," as much as Marion's indifference had done. He vented his petty spite against her in sneers like the following, too slight to be offensive, yet indicating, like other straws, the direction of the wind of his opinion.

"Miss Lavigne does not seem entirely 'fancy free;' she is evidently preoccupied. What barbarian of this region does she most affect?" or is she flaccid from being kept constantly in the vacuum of her own ideas?"

"You are severe, Mr. Gregory," I replied. "Miss Lavigne is a reserved, but very sensible young lady. She has several lovers, however, towards none of whom, it seems to me, does she 'seriously incline.'"

"Ah, one of your female snow-images, which are difficult to thaw, but which, after all, melt away to water beneath the ardent rays of some man's affection — not worth pursuing. Give me rather a draught of wine, your pure Falerneau; I admire the grand, enthusiastic, high-souled order of women," bending upon me approving eyes, — "women that are unto others as is wine to water; such as we rarely see, in short."

"The order is very limited, then, Mr. Gregory," I rejoined, smiling at the flat termination of his glowing sentence, caused perhaps by the cool scrutiny with which I regarded him as he approached his climax.

"Very, Miss Harz, unfortunately; one specimen, however, naturalists tell us, will constitute an order," bowing low, and laughing secretly, at the same time, with shaking shoulders, one of his peculiar fashions.

"You are a very mischievous person I fear, Mr. Gregory! you forget how easily the heads of convent nuns and country maidens are turned by the arts of the world. I warn you from the beginning, that every flattering word or expression dropped at Beauseincourt, is literally construed and received by its sisterhood. On this principle you will have to be very guarded, you see."

"Do you mean to insinuate that I would dare, in such a presence," another graceful bow, "to be other than in earnest? I wish, indeed, I were less so," in low accents.

A long-drawn sigh gave strength to this expression, and the limp hand was laid on the glossy vest, slightly to the left side, suggestively.

"Will you have the peppermint, Mr. Gregory?" interrogated Bertie gravely, from across the room, or will you have some of father's bitters?" rising, as if to procure them.

"Neither, I thank you, Miss Lavigne. You are very obliging, certainly," with a derisive bow: then turning to me, he added, in a low tone, "You are surrounded by strange elements, Miss Harz: how long do you think you can endure this incongruity? That young person is singularly simple, or simply singular, which is it?"

"You must find out for yourself, Mr. Gregory. Bertie means well, I think, on most occasions."

"Ah, probably so. She helps to pave the Inferno; is that your idea? I will inquire of herself. Miss Bertie," raising his voice before I could interfere to stay the inevitable conflict, "let me ask you how many bituminous bricks you may be supposed to have laid in the streets of Lucifer's dominion in your time, not to use a harsher term? I ask merely for information," drawling affectedly.

"Enough to scorch your feet, I hope, when you go there," she replied promptly, with inexcusable rudeness, and without moving a muscle of her face, but with laughing eyes.

"You will share my promenade, I hope, Miss Bertie," nothing disconcerted, and evidently amused.

"Not if I can help it, Mr. Gregory. You may be the one appointed to torture me, however, for aught I know. If so, I can't help myself. I suppose Lucifer, as you call him, will settle that.

"Wonderfully sharp, I declare," he exclaimed, falling back affectedly in his chair, and laughing literally with his shoulders. "I had no idea she understood my reference. She is a treasure-trove in this howling wilderness. You must have been training her on the Scythian principle, Miss Harz; to tell the truth, and do battle from her childhood."

"I have not been here quite long enough to influence Bertie's inclinations, Mr. Gregory; you must give her Huguenot blood some credit for these. She is a very good friend to secure, I assure you, nevertheless."

"But I shall never secure her," he rejoined, shaking his head dolefully. "There is natural antagonism there; I saw it from the first. Her large, strange eyes looked several times as though they would devour me, and you also," — turning suddenly upon me, — "I do believe your instincts, too, are all against me. — Now confess. What! silent? Then I know my doom," playing with my knitting-ball as he spoke.

"The fact is, Miss Harz, after a pause, I am the most unfortunate fellow in the world in that respect. I prepossess nobody but parsons and old maids. My life is a constant game of 'chickamy, chickamy craney crow.' I cling desperately to the skirts of those who turn their backs on me. My skirts are on the contrary seized and clung to, pertinaciously from behind, by those I can't endure, and from whom I fly. So there is an endless procession and persecution."

"But parsons and old maids are the salt of the earth, you know, and you are honored by their selection."

"Not the attic salt, certainly, and I care not a whit for any other sort. There, I have impulsively spoken the truth, and shocked you."

"So you think the truth would shock me? Oh, no, not at all. Believe me, it is no stranger; nor is the language of badinage entirely new to me, notwithstanding my warning awhile ago. I, like yourself, have unfortunately seen something of the world."

"I knew it at a glance," pausing awhile, for farther revelations perhaps; then, unable to restrain his curiosity, boldly bursting out into interrogatories as quaintly put as impertinent.

"May I ask where you located your 'field of the cloth of gold,' or what your arena was, or who constituted your participants in the tilting-match at the tournament of fashion?"

"No, Mr. Gregory, never, with my permission, can you ask these questions; or, at least, you must be content to let them pass unanswered," I replied gravely, taking my ball from his hands at the same time, and turning coldly away.

"There is a mystery there," he pursued, bending his head confidentially, so as to peep into my averted face: "make me your father confessor, I humbly implore. You will find me the most discreet of men. The interest with which you inspire me" —

"Is *amply* returned," I retorted, laughing the next

moment at my own comprehensive rejoinder, then adding, "Spare me the melodrama, if you please, Mr. Gregory. My story is very commonplace, like Canning's poor knife-grinder's; it would not entertain you at all. You recollect the famous 'Story? Lord bless you, I have none to tell, sir!' I am here to make my living, as you are, I suppose, to make yours, in an honorable fashion, and I trust we may both succeed. That is all we need mutually care about."

"So young, so practical, and so sceptical!" he murmured. But there was an end of the subject.

After this he expanded. Certainly, few men could be more agreeable than he was to strangers when he exerted himself, as he did disinterestedly, during the rest of that day and evening for their benefit and entertainment. He left us the next morning, to be the guest of Mr. de Bonville, to whom he had brought letters of recommendation; and I missed him sorely. The dreariness of Beauseincourt fell around us again like a mantle. Marion was the only one who did not deplore his departure, and miss his animated presence. Even Colonel Lavigne remarked, in his pompous way, standing on the rug at evening, —

"I think Gregory will pass even among Southerners. There is no taint of trade about him, which is much in his favor, nothing dapper, no trace of the primitive Yankee. I beg your pardon, Miss Harz," bending his head courteously, "I sometimes forget that you are of that ilk, or rather race of people. I hope you feel the implied compliment."

"Oh, deeply, Colonel Lavigne, — the intention of it, rather."

"There, father, you have hurt Miss Miriam's feelings again," said Madge, coming to the rescue. "I declare, for a man of your tact"—

"Tact, my dear! What question is there of tact where I am concerned? I never pretend to make a trade of good breeding. 'Noblesse oblige,' you know. Tact, forsooth."

This was not the first time I had heard this oracular utterance from the lips of Colonel Lavigne. It was with him a usual and comprehensive saying.

"To tell you the truth," said I, flushing a little, "I have no right to take up Yankee cudgels for I am purely of English descent, and have no relations that are not."

"Why did you not say so before?" asked Colonel La-

vigne, wheeling on his heels with his hands behind him, — a military movement which he executed with great precision whenever surprised, — then, without waiting for an answer, he went on, "That makes every difference. Pure English descent, hey! There *is* something of the John Bull about you, I believe, upon reflection; but you don't look Saxon any more than Yankee. I might take you for an Italian, a Spanish woman, or even a Louisiana lady; though"—

"My Jewish blood asserts itself, it seems."

"Oh, that is the idea, upon my word! I should never have suspected it; but, now that you speak of it, there is an expression about the eyes, the bridge of the nose not wide enough, however." He stood, inspecting me as though I had been "trotted out for sale," just as he did on that first morning in the Mansion House Hotel. The blood rose to my brow.

"Now that you know my descent, Colonel Lavigne, you can abuse the Yankees to your heart's content;" and, gathering up my knitting-work quietly, I left him master of the scene of action.

"Father is a perfect barbarian," said Bertie, who had sat quietly under the infliction of his blundering politeness, as she insinuated her hand in mine on the stairway, which we were ascending together on the way to our chamber. "I am so sick of that hackneyed saying, 'Noblesse oblige.' He applies it constantly. But it is the motto or one of the mottoes of our house, you know."

"No, I did not know, Bertie. I thought it was a common saying, applicable to the necessities entailed by rank and honor."

"Well, perhaps you are right; I wish 'Noblesse' did not 'oblige,' sometimes though. I can't see the use of forever throwing up one's blood in other people's faces, and spattering their very garments with it. Let it stay where it properly belongs."

"What a strange, shocking turn of expression, Bertie! You should be more careful in your images."

"I mean just what I say, — *vomiting blood* forever, — there now!" defiantly and resolutely. "I believe in forgetting all about our viscera when we are in good society," adding in low tones, "particularly when our blood seethes black in our veins below."

"It is you that are coarse and barbarous now, Bertie."

"Well, 'I was born so, mother,' as the hunchback said. Is not that a good excuse, or reason rather? I suppose I am a Lavigne to the backbone; they all say so. The rest are Benoits, a gentle and plebeian race, according to the record. Mother looks like a lady, every inch of her, though, don't she, Miss Harz? And father — well, after all, there is something lordly about him, in his way — the old Crusader."

I understood what Bertie meant, though I could scarcely follow her enthusiasms. Colonel Lavigne had indeed a face and figure both that seemed to have belonged to a past age, when beauty was more grand and characteristic than now, and ugliness more heroic and grotesque. He had, too, a certain knightly air, and I could well imagine his stiff figure in a suit of armor, as quite impressive.

The very books he loved he seemed to have read in some contemporaneous condition that imbued his more perfectly with their genius and intention (so foreign from our time, so uncongenial to the modern turn of thought) than any other mind I have ever known.

As simply and confidingly as though he had moved among the living authors, he read and spoke of Cervantes, Bacon, and Sir Thomas Browne; he revelled in the "Arcadia" of Sir Philip Sidney; he loved that dreary book, "The Anatomy of Melancholy," that should only be taken in homœopathic doses; and delighted in "Sir Isaac Walton," and "Rabelais." He rebuked me several times, I remember, for my distaste to some of these authors, my complete ignorance of others, my general indifference to ancient learning.

"Life is not long enough for all," I answered; "and, with the exception of the old dramatists, I have found nothing farther back than Sir Walter Scott that I took the least interest in reading. There was doubtless genius in those old books, which has been developed by master minds in modern days. They were filled with uncut gems, valueless in the original, which have been polished and taught to sparkle by our great eighteenth and nineteenth century lapidaries."

These remarks settled the matter, as well as his opinion of me. He persecuted me no more on the subject of my literary tastes, which he despised; yet I sincerely respected

his, believing them to be a portion of his temperament, and the most genuine thing about him.

Perhaps I err in this assertion, after all. His individuality pervaded every act of his life, whether for good or evil; and had he been less natural, less himself, it might have fared better for his family, and even for his own soul. Certainly, he had his good qualities. There was no better, or at least more forbearing husband and father, no kinder master, no more generous provider for the wants of all of his dependants, to be found in any position.

After becoming used to his peculiarities, he was not unpleasant, either, as host or guest; and his ideas of courtesy, if narrow and egotistical, were still consistent and lofty. His patronizing ways were simply amusing to me, knowing how childishly dependent and communicative he could be at times, and had proved himself to be, even in my case.

That he was possessed of mania, I believed firmly in the beginning of my acquaintance with him. But, as I have said elsewhere, this idea retreated before my pursuing mind more and more as time rolled on, and revealed glimpses of character unsuspected in the beginning. Yet to the last he remained to me a problem and mystery, which I have never yet been able to solve or to dispel, — a breathing anomaly, a human labyrinth without a clue, a law unto himself, to be resolved in impotence.

BOOK THIRD.

"Beseech you, sir, be merry; you have cause,
So have we all, for joy of this escape."

TEMPEST.

"Sir Eglamour, a thousand times good-morrow!
* * * * * *
Here comes Boyet, and mirth is in his face."

SHAKESPEARE.

"Heavy and sick within me is my heart;
These walls breathe on me like a churchyard vault;
I cannot tell you how this place doth go
Against my nature.

The place's evil omens will I change."

WALLENSTEIN.

"She, too, while gazing on those eyes
That sink into her soul so deep,
Forgets all fears, all miseries,
Or feels them like the wretch in sleep,
Whom fancy cheats into a smile."

MOORE.

"There is a festival where knights and dames,
And aught that wealth or lofty lineage claims,
Appear — a highborn and a welcome guest,
In Otho's hall — came Lara with the rest.
* * * * *
On Lara's glance emotion gathering grew,
As if distrusting that the stranger threw.
Along the stranger's aspect fixed and stern,
Flashed more than thence the vulgar eye could learn."

BYRON'S LARA.

BOOK THIRD.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTMAS approached. Nowhere else does this festival occasion more rejoicing, than on a Southern plantation. It is the happy privilege of the planter to diffuse gladness over his whole domain at this season of universal gratulation, and the pleasure and happiness of the slave is reflected in the heart and on the countenance of its author.

Colonel Lavigne had never appeared to such advantage in my eyes as when employed in carrying out his benevolent schemes for the comfort and enjoyment of his sable dependants. A man with one foot already planted upon the verge of the abyss of ruin, and hurried on by a doom that sooner or later must irresistibly overwhelm him, paused, as it seemed to me, to confer benefits before taking the fatal leap, oblivious of his own extremity. This was a poetic view of the subject, doubtless: yet I entertained it feelingly, and it helped to erase, or rather cover over, some impressions that had been received, perhaps too hastily; for the human mind is not precisely in this respect like the palimpsest of the ancients, a parchment to be cleansed and rewritten at will.

It was a delightful sight, certainly, and one not readily forgotten, — that of the mother, cheerful, active, benevolent, still handsome, surrounded by her fair young daughters, each and all absorbed in one common work of charity and affection.

The great gallery running across the rear of the house was the scene of action, and the courtyard below was crowded

with expectant faces. I recognized that day, for the first time, how patriarchal was this Southern institution when governed by humanity, and could comprehend better than I had done before, how hard it must seem to cut the "Gordian knot," as I had audaciously counselled Madam Lavigne to do, on two occasions, it may be remembered.

"No, they are right," I thought, "to sink or swim with these confiding creatures. Never again, perhaps, would these slaves know happiness, if scattered now. The feudal feeling prevails in the true Southern heart, in spite of law; and the serf is the 'son of the soil,' in more senses than one."

It was a cheerless, sunless morning, I remember, that which preceded Christmas Day at Beauseincourt. The first wintry weather prevailed then that I had felt in Georgia (mild as the autumn had been); and as we stood on the gallery, engaged in measuring off and dispensing goods, we were thoroughly chilled, though wrapped in shawls. But the piles of gay-colored prints, shawls, woollens, and head-handkerchiefs around us almost took the place of sunlight, and reminded me of the many-colored leaves, wanting here, of our gorgeous northern autumnal forests, drifting beneath the trees after early frosts.

There were flannels and shawls of all colors for the old; ribbons and dresses as diversified for the young, who looked forward to many a night of carnival, during the week of holiday, in the great quarter kitchen.

The women in the courtyard stood in a group apart from the men, conveniently to the house; so that each one could approach in turn, and receive from the hand of the mistress her allotted presents (there was, as I have said, a variety to suit all recipients), with a kind Christmas greeting, heartily and respectfully returned.

The effect thus produced was singularly striking. The plantation uniform was blue and white, relieved by gay headkerchiefs, principally of crimson and yellow. I seemed to look down on a parterre of mixed hyacinths, variegated tulips, and dark-hearted poppies, as I beheld them. The display of ivory might have put to shame a herd of Ceylon elephants. There were bright eyes and beaming faces uplifted to our gaze, that would have made an abolitionist gnash his teeth, and tear his hair; and happy, irresponsible hearts behind them beat in unison.

But all was orderly, decorous, and quiet in this group of women. A little, low, tittering laughter there was, some whispering, bantering, and comparing of presents, an occasional cry of an impatient child borne in its mother's arms, or hanging at her skirts ; but, beyond this, all was subdued and quiet. So much for feminine tact, whatever the degree.

The men, contrary to all legendary lore, were not as a body as dignified, by any means, as the women, on this occasion so trying to reticence. Their emphatic, and invariable "thankee, Master, thankee," in return for every gift, was uttered loudly, and followed by animated discussions among themselves, and often uproarious guffaws. They gathered in a dingy looking crowd around the steps of the plantation store-room, on the platform of which, before the open door, Colonel Lavigne had taken his stand, with his assistant and prime minister, Jura, at his side. Thence he distributed tobacco, whiskey, overcoats, Sunday shoes and hats, whips, fireworks, and last, not least, powder and shot; for many of the men surrounding him, those most trusted, possessed guns, with which, after the hours of allotted labor, they brought down the game of the season, which smoked habitually on their master's board, and for which they were always paid in goods, both liberally and promptly.

There were about sixty of these men in number, as well as I could compute, the "hands" being finished off by a plentiful fringing of boys, the "supes" of a plantation, only called on in times of need, and employing most of their valuable leisure in fishing, inventing, and setting bird-traps, and in 'possum and coon hunting. Specimens of the ragamuffin were these, unequalled even by the Gamin of Paris, and so far undescribed.

The men were comfortably but coarsely clad in their usual working-clothes, consisting of loose, ill-fitting gray garments, baggy cotton shirts, well-worn wool hats and scow-shaped boots, cumbrous and clodhopping. They had the usual lounging, shambling gait of the field negro, wherever seen, and I observed King stepping about among them like a mulatto prince, so different was his mien, so superior his action and attire. It amused me to draw the contrast, and note what differences civilization made, even among these Pariahs.

Just as the interest of the crowd of men seemed concen-

trated upon some scarlet blankets, which Jura was holding up before them by his master's directions, the huge bear, Mumbo, with his chain rattling behind him was seen making his way vigorously among the sturdy legs, that scattered at his approach in a panic that was at first diverting. His object was soon apparent; he was in search of his master alone; and climbing the steps of the store-room clumsily, he was soon seen standing on his hind legs beside him in his favorite position, one that had never failed to inspire me with terror. He was poised now, as before described, with his fore paws resting on his master's shoulders, while he gaped above him open-mouthed, revealing his red, lolling tongue and savage teeth.

"Down, Mumbo, down," said Colonel Lavigne, angrily, his face darkening as he spoke, and he struck the bear as he pushed him off with a bar of lead he held in his right hand.

The blow must have enraged the beast, unused to be so repelled, for, with a fierce growl, he turned, still staggering on his hind legs, and clenched his master, hugging him closely in his formidable embrace, and compelling him, by the suddenness of his assault, to drop his weapon of defence. The whole occurrence occupied but a moment; the catastrophe seemed inevitable.

"He will be killed! my husband will be killed!" shrieked Madame Lavigne.

"Oh, father! father!" burst from the terrified girls, as they stretched their arms towards him from their own protected position, helpless to save, and agonized to see.

I stood with straining eyes, cold and immovable as stone. Bertie alone was equal to the emergency. After the pause of a second, she dashed forward like a "menaid" (I could compare her to nothing else), her tawny, yellow hair floating behind her, that look in her eye of desperate resolve, I have seen in no others, her lips set, her cheek burning, her nostril dilated, and every nerve and muscle strung to their utmost tension.

"I have the knife!" she cried, holding it up as she flashed by me. "Where is Ossian?"

At the sound of his name the dog came bounding after her, and she disappeared in the crowd of men, who once more had closed around the store-room steps, one or two of whom were now vainly trying to drag off the bear by

tugging at the chain. Under and over these Ossian sprang, just as the chain gave way, hurling back those who held it into the arms of the crowd behind. Another moment, and his fangs had found the throat of the shaggy monster, and he was throttling him to his death.

Then, as a diver emerges from the sea beside a startled boat's crew, we saw with fear and amazement indescribable the small, slight figure of Bertie rise, as if floating upwards from the mass of heads about the steps, and uplifted by invisible hands, stand securely on the platform beside her father, still in the direful embrace of his adversary.

Colonel Lavigne was livid with exhaustion, I saw, as he turned his face towards her; but in another moment he had grasped the bowie-knife with his disengaged hand and buried the blade to the haft in the breast of the infuriated animal. Whirling then almost instantly from the tenacious grip of Ossian, (and who that has seen a Newfoundland dog of great size and strength but remembers the persistent hold of that inexorable jaw?) the bear freed himself from his relentless grasp by the power of his own dying weight, and fell heavily to the ground across the low side-railing, which he crushed beneath him as he went over, and lay there bleeding and senseless, if not wholly dead. The dog leaped after him in the next moment, but Colonel Lavigne, stepping forward to the edge of the platform, warned him off sternly.

"Take Ossian off, boys," he commanded, seeing the dog inclined to disobey him: "I will not have Mumbo worried in his last moments; put a pistol to his head, rather," handing his to King, who joyfully fulfilled his mandate.

"Silence, there; I have a word to say to every one of you," he thundered; and the gaping crowd was still as though electrified. "Now listen to me; if any one among you know who loosed that bear, come up and inform this moment, and receive this reward," holding up before them a doubloon.

There was a slight stir perceptible, but no reply, no individual movement.

"I seed him, Masta, wen he broke his chain hisself," said a wee voice at last from the crowd, recognized as that of Sip, the bootblack.

"I suppose that is the end of it," said Colonel Lavigne, coolly repocketing his gold. "Well, I have saved twenty dollars; but somebody will get an infernal whipping yet:"

and with this empty menace, Colonel Lavigne limped across the courtyard, after descending the steps cautiously, assisted by Jura, to be received in the arms of his sobbing wife and daughters. But Bertie had been removed, terribly nerve-shaken as she was, to the quiet of her chamber, where under my surveillance, she was left undisturbed for a time, as she entreated might be the case.

Jura had stood unflinchingly by his master during the whole conflict, at first beating the bear ineffectually over the head and shoulders with the bar of lead, that had dropped from his master's hand; afterwards, with more success, thrusting it down his gaping throat, to prevent him from tearing his victim. But he was an old and feeble man, and could not long have aided him in maintaining the unequal struggle. The men below had behaved very badly, it seemed to me, in not more promptly seconding his efforts in his master's behalf, like a set of cowardly ruffians even. But this, I was assured, was only a matter of temperament. Negroes, as a class, have little presence of mind and are sluggish until fairly aroused, even the best of them, nor are their sympathies readily enlisted. It is in the qualities of promptness, energy, and forethought, that the white race must always assert supremacy, if, indeed, we could entertain the thought for a moment that other attributes might be equalized. God has not set his mark of color, shape, and odor in vain; and it is flying in the face of Deity himself, to refuse to acknowledge his sign-manual, as a means of everlasting distinction.

But this is no place for digression, or discussion. In a space of time much shorter than that I have taken to describe it in, this whole scene was enacted. The knife, let me here observe, was one Colonel Lavigne habitually carried about him, but which he had left on the floor of the gallery, after using it to sever a rope that morning which bound a package, and to the quick observation of Bertie, he was indebted for his life.

The bear was buried by Colonel Lavigne's command, and in his own presence. For some reason he could not endure to have the remains of Mumbo treated like common brute flesh, made a barbecue of, whereon to feed negroes, or given to the birds of the air, or beasts of prey, — so sacred even after his rebellion and self-sought end, was the carcass of his dead hobby.

There were rumors dark and deep, however, Bertie whispered, as to the fate of Mumbo's corse, that amused me no little, but which fortunately never reached the ears of the master, being carefully suppressed by those arch-allies, Sip and King, and confidentially related by Sylphy. Sip had overheard the quarter negroes say, however (Sip, who had magnanimously foresworn himself about the breaking of Mumbo's chain, in order to save a guilty party from stern interrogatories), that Uncle Quimbo (one of their Delphic oracles) had "done said as how a little clean yerf nebber hurt good meat yet, but some how 'proved its savor; anyhow, dat bar Jumbo done libbed off de fat ob de lan' long enough to be a mighty sweet morsel to roll under nigger's tongue, an' day gwine to try him on de occasion ob de fust quarter ball, for de benefit ob de public. He was a mighty wicked varmint, anyhow, dat Mumbo; but his turn done cum at las' like any odder nigger's," ending with the inevitable "yah, yah!" Whereupon Sylphy wittily added, as she informed us, "T'anks to de gracious King!" As to the worthy last punningly alluded to by the plantation belle, he had the laugh on his own side now, after seeing the "scatteration" that the appearance of the bear had effected among the crowd of men who had, before then, been in the habit of taunting him unmercifully about his own evident fear of the beast. But his practical joke had proved far more tragical than he could have anticipated, when he slyly unlocked the chain and drove the beast out of his haunting-place, to avenge himself by playing upon the terrors of his companions.

I will pass over all that was said on this occasion on the subject of Bertie's prowess. She herself would brook no eulogiums, and turned white and sick, whenever the subject was named.

"Don't talk about heroism," she entreated, "in connection with such a matter; I could not help doing what I did, any more than the rest could help standing still. I go where the blast carries me, like a dead leaf. I myself, am nothing but a poor, impulsive, helpless creature, God knows, of no use to anybody, not even myself. To be called fine names, sinks me in my own opinion, and makes me ridiculous in that of others. Let me alone on this subject, for pity's sake."

Thus she appealed to her sisters, not without more temper than the occasion demanded. She stamped her foot slightly,

I remember, in her impatient embarrassment (a foot so arched and elegantly formed, that it seemed imperial in its very moulding), and covering her face with her hands wept aloud in the next moment, such was her inconsistency.

So it was agreed among us that Bertie should be "let alone," as she desired to be, by all but Colonel Lavigne, who would make no conditions or compromise of the sort.

"I might as well be morbid myself about the affair," he urged, "having been nearly shaken to death by that monster, as Bertie, who did nothing but hand me a knife, which came, I must say, at the right moment, and was opportunely thought of, all must acknowledge. Yet, after all, the dog was the chief assistance. I will get him a silver collar for his New-Year's gift, and it shall have an inscription on it commemorating his fidelity and courage. Do you hear that, Ossian, my boy?" And stooping stiffly, he patted the great, noble creature, whose eyes glistened with joy and gratitude.

They were a fine study at that moment; the strange-looking, tawny man, with his face ablaze, as it rarely was, with vivid expression, and the superb, intelligent dog who seemed to value a touch from his master's hand beyond the fondest caress from any other.

Whence came the strange control that this master exerted alike over man and beast, quiet and undemonstrative as was his manner to all around him, and absent and self-absorbed as seemed his usual demeanor? Was there, after all, in that dark, sophistic breast, some latent glimmering of Promethean fire; some vestige of the heroes from whom he claimed descent?

Godfrey Lavigne had signalized himself in Palestine as a warrior and a leader. His grim old portrait hung in the saloon, — a characteristic effigy, very suggestive, however, to the imagination. On his banner was a vine-leaf, and the inscription "Sous Lavigne," which had become the watchword of his race, as it was the battle-cry of a host that sent terror to the Saracen. Did anything of this genius of command indeed lurk in his descendant? Was it truly, as he had said, the destiny of all who came in contact with him to be "Sous Lavigne?"

These thoughts passed quickly through my brain as I saw him standing above Ossian, with an air of stateliness of which not even his grotesque oddities could rob him, —

a mixture which made the later remark of a wicked wag, who said that he always seemed to him a "cross between Pharaoh and Punchinello," very clear to my comprehension. I think, though, I should have substituted "Powhatan" for the Egyptian King, as even more pointed and characteristic.

We were sitting around the crackling wood fire on Christmas eve, which, in honor of the occasion, though the family was, so far, alone, had been kindled in the many-windowed, white-curtained drawing-room, bright with its numerous wax lights, and had just drawn ourselves into a snug home circle around the immense Aubusson rug, with its group of tigers at play (wonderfully lifelike), which in winter time relieved the bare parquet, and added greatly to human comfort, when a thundering rap at the front door startled us every one, and brought the master of the house abruptly to his feet.

It was seldom, indeed, at this season, that visitors came by night to Beauseincourt, and the intolerable weather that had set in since noon made such an advent more than usually remarkable. Guests had, it is true, been invited formally, according to ancient custom, for the celebration of New Year, but were not expected, the earliest of them, for several days yet, and the idea of being forestalled in her hospitable intentions fluttered Madame Lavigne visibly.

"I should not wonder at all if it were the Finesteres," she said, nervously, to her husband; "they are always making mistakes, you know;" and she touched the spring-bell by the fireplace to summon Jura or King to attend the front door, where thundering raps on the massive, bronze vine-leaf that served as knocker and deformed its panels were still heard unintermittingly.

"What can those fellows be thinking about?" said Colonel Lavigne, peevishly, "that they don't go forward and admit our visitors, who are standing so long in the rain;" and he rose stiffly from his chair a second time, observing, "I am hardly equal to the effort, used up as I am, of meeting those people in the hall; but as there are none but ladies here, I suppose it can't be helped. No, you shall not stir, Louisa; nor you Miss Harz; nor any of you;" waving his hand decisively towards his three elder daughters, all somewhat clamorously offering their services. "No, I will go myself; many a bear hunter in the Rocky

Mountains receives worse injuries every day ;" and just as he was preparing to set forth on this enterprise, encouraged by the rather irrelevant comparison he had just drawn, which nearly convulsed me with suppressed merriment, the door was opened, and two guests were ushered in, dismally as usual, by the ceremonious Jura, who announced them as "Major Fabrand and anoder gentleman."

During the tumult within, they had been quietly admitted, and relieved of their overcoats, hats, etc., by the men in waiting in the hall. Immediate stillness of course prevailed.

"Walk in, gentlemen ; glad to see you back again, Favrand. Where and how is Celia?" said Colonel Lavigne, limping forward with extended hands to greet his guests.

"Oh, she went home by the carriage route; decidedly the best, you know, though the longest by twenty miles. She must have reached Bellevue yesterday. In trying to take the short cut, we find ourselves benighted, and feel compelled, to-night, to claim your hospitality. This is Captain Wentworth, Colonel Lavigne, a friend of Walter's," drawing his companion forward as he spoke. "He meant to come here first, even had I gone on home. He is the bearer of credentials from your son, which he is in haste to deliver, as I have not been to present him, I am ashamed to confess."

The two gentlemen thus introduced now shook hands heartily on the strength of this information.

"I am happy to see any friend of Walter's, our own dear boy. I should have gone out to meet you when you first knocked, rather than have allowed you to wait for my lazy varlets, but for having been stiffened up a little to-day in a conflict with a bear, a monstrous brute, by the bye, from which I deserved"—

"Really, Lavigne, you are coming out in your old age," interrupted Major Favrand, merrily, "Where did you unearth the monster? I have not heard of a bear in Lesdernier for a century, except your tame abomination. But you will tell us all about it after awhile. For my part I am 'a-cold,' like Keats's owl, 'for all my feathers ;' and if you and Wentworth will insist on a mysterious tête-à-tête in Siberia, I must leave you for a more torrid zone, for I assure you it *rains*," emphasizing the last word and shrugging his shoulders shiveringly as he came forward to the fire.

"There is no mistaking of the intention of the clerk of the weather this time: it is as broad as the Irishman's hint. How are you, Louisa?" shaking her hand mechanically, I thought. "How are all of these dear girls?" giving each one in turn a brief hand-shaking and pat on the shoulders, with a kiss to Louey, less conventional.

"Oh, how delightful this is to a poor storm-beaten wanderer, 'fresh from the midnight heath!' What is there like fire? It is the soul of the universe, I believe, with the Persians," warming his feet as he faced us, by lifting the introverted sole of each alternately to the flame, so as to shift his poise continuously, yet never lose it. "I am thawing out rapidly. The reptile will soon be himself again, Louisa, I am happy to say. I understand, at last, how moths feel when they dance right into the candle. I am bewildered myself by all this light, warmth and beauty. What a galaxy of stars you have about you, my dear Louisa; and there is a new constellation, I see," dropping his voice. "Introduce me, forthwith; I am charmed."

"Miss Harz, Major Favrand," said Madame Lavigne, rather stiffly, in which fashion I bowed.

"Miss Hart! Is it possible?" and he turned to me with empressement. "You must let me shake hands with you, my dear young lady, out of regard for your antecedents. In one sense we are old acquaintances already; yet I cannot see the least resemblance to any one of your family; not even to Frank, the darkest and best-looking of all but yourself. Yours must be quite a new face in the household. Where did you procure it?"

In my bewilderment I had accorded to him my hand, which he shook briefly; but I felt from the first sentence that he labored under a mistake, which I would set right as soon as possible. In the meantime his voluble stream of talk overwhelmed me.

"Strange to see a lady of your fashion domesticated in this 'jumping-off place,' for so I call Lesdernier, in spite of my wife's predilection for it. I cannot wonder, though, that you are contented, now that you are here, and in such a circle," glancing approvingly around. "By the bye, Louisa, while I think of it, where in the name of common humanity is your Yankee governess? I hope you do not condemn her to solitary confinement on sponge and slate pencils; if she is a little apple-cheeked and milkmaidish,

or lantern-jawed and bookwormish, those are the two several approved styles, I believe, up there."

He here came voluntarily to a sudden halt, looking towards Madame Lavigne for an answer that never came. The pause was intense, and I was just about to relieve the restraint of all by declaring myself the missing and injured party, and setting right his mistake, when Louey suddenly advanced towards him and drawing his head down whispered something in his ear. He started as though he had been shot, and there was a suppressed titter among the girls, in which I joined inwardly, though pitying him extremely. The position was not an enviable one.

"God bless my soul!" he ejaculated impulsively.

"Don't you wish the floor would open and swallow you up, Cousin Victor?" Bertie asked maliciously. But strange to say, this apparently rude and irrevelant speech relieved his embarrassment more than a more courteous one could have done under the circumstances.

"I do indeed, Bertie," he responded amiably; "but, unfortunately, the age of miracles has passed; besides, you have no cellars. All I can do is to throw myself on feminine mercy. You must all plead for me, every one of you. Tell her that I am the greatest rattlebrain in Christendom, and habitually array myself in cap and bells. Tell her there have been hints in my case about the State Asylum," tapping his head significantly. "Plead lunacy, anything, so that peace be established, and that right quickly; or will you permit me to explain and apologize in person, Miss Hart?" wheeling abruptly towards me with a most penitential expression of face.

"Nothing of the sort is necessary, Major Favrand. I see perfectly the cause of your mistake. My name is Harz, not Hart. The difference is so slight as to have made the error a natural one."

"Especially as I expected fully to see Madeline Hart here this Christmas, by invitation."

"She has declined the visit, Cousin Victor, declined at the last hour," said Madge, from across the room.

"Louisa, why in the name of common sense didn't you tell me that?" he remonstrated, "and pronounce more distinctly the final z," hissing it out like a serpent. "It is all your fault, Louisa, and I shall never forgive you, if Miss Harz never forgives me. But she has a benign face, and I

believe may begin to hope for pardon; may I not, Miss Harz?"

"Again I must assure you, Major Favrand, I have nothing to forgive. I am not even a Yankee, and beyond that imputation, there is everything to thank you for. Your eloquent pleading in favor of imprisoned governesses, and your pathetic description of their diet, would alone claim my eternal gratitude, were I the subject of such treatment, which, fortunately, I am not, as you perceive."

"No, indeed, no schoolroom that ever was invented would hold you after school hours, I am sure, more than ten minutes," he said, approaching me laughingly. "You would fly out of the windows, even if they secured the door, on the wings of your will. My own private belief is, that you are 'America Vespucci' in disguise, or some other distinguished personage, — no schoolmarm at all. Lady Morgan's Princess broke loose, perhaps, out of her book of the Boudoir. (Now don't say I get things all mixed up, I entreat!) Madeline Hart, indeed, with her blue eyes and light hair! Where is your noted discrimination, Victor Favrand?" smiting his brow.

"But to be serious, my dear young lady, I thought it strange one of that essentially practical race, could ever come to have "l'air distingue et romanesque" that characterizes your exterior. I see by the flash of your eye that you understand French. A very pleasant alternative, sometimes, when one departs from the beaten track of thought, and needs new channels for communication. The little niceties of that tongue are most delightful. As a lawyer, I learned to appreciate it, the legal terms are so clear and definite and subtle all at once. Such is our want of precision, that we have been obliged to adopt many delicate meanings, you know, even in our social system. But all that is a matter of course. How do you like them all — these cousins of mine, I mean, — old 'noblesse oblige,' Count Prosper, as his neighbors call him, and the rest?" bending low to ask this question, to which no answer was permitted by the suddenness with which he jerked his head up again.

Without expecting a reply, probably, he continued:

"The girls, — gentle things, aren't they, all except Bertie? She's the limb of the family, — smart though, very, if detestable. Louisa, — sweet woman! perfect, my wife thinks. I, you know, prefer imperfection though. Marion,

almost beautiful; Madge, handsomer, somehow, though, to my taste. Any beaux about? Stupid enough, isn't it? Queer, old, broken-down place. House looks outside as if it had an attack of malignant erysipelas. Comfortable quarters within, though, — even aristocratic, tapestry, chairs, and all. Gothic hall and stairway quite grand, eh? Going to write a book, I suppose, and put us all in? Hope so."

"The idea has not suggested itself to me, so far, Major Favrand, if you except a diary, very carelessly kept."

"Oh, that is delightful!" and he rubbed his hands vivaciously. "When we are better acquainted, I hope you will give me a glimpse of that volume. Think we shall get on," nodding sagaciously. "But Wentworth *must* be relieved; matters are becoming desperate. Beauseincourt has had him long enough in the cold and by the button. That man has been known to petrify people before now. Wentworth, Wentworth, I say!" lifting his voice slightly, and rising on his toes in speaking, as if making desperate exertions. "I shall grow hoarse with calling the poor victim (aside). Captain Wardour Wentworth, here are some ladies dying to make your acquaintance, and if you stand there much longer," making a speaking trumpet of his hand, and again raising his voice, "you will turn into a pillar of ice, like Lot's wife. Salt, was it, Laura?" dropping his tone, as she corrected him. "Oh, that spoils my comparison;" then again elevating it, "you are in the dangerous grasp of a one idea button-breaking, petrifying, Medusa of a man. Wentworth, I say!" trumpeting again.

"What would you have, Major Favrand?" asked Captain Wentworth a little sternly, I thought, stepping forth from the shadow, and thus standing suddenly revealed before us.

"You forget, my dear fellow, what drowned wretches we were awhile ago, when the retainers seized and peeled us in the hall. John the Baptist, just rising from the Jordan, with a sinner by the nape of the neck, never cut a wetter figure than we, in those long cloaks of ours; and you lose sight, too, of the fact, that fire is the natural remedy for the ills of chilled humanity. Approach, my friend, and sun yourself in the smiles of beauty and flames of 'old hickory.' But I forget; you have had enough of the last already, probably," laughing low at this sally. "By the bye, Louisa, there are letters."

While Madame Lavigne was reading these from the welcome hand of her son, "Beauseincourt," (as Major Favrand fantastically called his host) was leading Captain Wentworth around his domestic circle, like a captive Indian prince to be duly exhibited to every member of the family, and named to each in turn, from Louey up; for such was Colonel Lavigne's old-fashioned interpretation of the rites of hospitable initiation.

I was the last person introduced, I remember, after which ceremonial, Captain Wentworth turned quietly away with a relieved air, and crossed the room, to take a seat near his hostess, now folding up her letter, and ready to converse, doubtless, about the perfections of Lieutenant Walter Lavigne.

While thus engaged, I could not help observing this new candidate for attention, and drawing a comparison between the two gentlemen who had so suddenly broken in upon the completeness of our family circle, and already created such a diversion of interests, by their inopportune arrival.

Major Favrand (I see him distinctly before my mind's eye at this moment, as he stood that night, with his back to the fire, his hands clasped behind him, his face beaming with animation) was a man of forty-three or four years of age, looking younger, however, than he really was, with a short, compact, characteristic figure, very trim, straight and military in his bearing, with legs and arms somewhat too slender for his portly body, finished, as these were, by miniature extremities. He had a good square head, covered with fine, black hair, here and there very slightly streaked with gray, or rather sparsely sown with silver threads, scarcely discernible by candlelight; a round, olive-colored face, expansive forehead, manly chin, regular, but insignificant profile, small, black, twinkling eyes, both martial and merry, and a mouth which, although shaded by an asp-like moustache, "à la der Freyschutz," was humorous in its expression. His whole bearing was slightly supercilious, and his voice rather too high pitched in key to be strictly agreeable; but it was still well modulated and controlled, and thus rendered endurable. His laugh was contagious and irresistible, and rang out like a boy's. It takes a well-bred man to afford to laugh naturally, as he did; it is a test. In a common person such an indulgence would savor of coarseness; in him it was an additional attraction.

In short, he was quite delightful. This was the impression, at least, he made on me at first.

Captain Wentworth, ten or twelve years younger than his companion, was a graceful, well-proportioned man, somewhat above the medium height, with a commanding presence, which made him seem taller, at first, than he really was; the effect, perhaps, of his remarkably well-set head and knightly shoulders. His eyes were steadfast and clear; dark gray in color, I found later, and looking out luminously from beneath well-hung and somewhat massive eyebrows, and a forehead that might have belonged to a demi-god, not merely beaming and intellectual, but benign as well, from which the dark chestnut hair was swept carelessly back, plume fashion. This noble brow was certainly his most beautiful and marked feature; yet the rest were finely moulded; the curve of the cheek and jaw was absolutely antique. The upper lip, which was well supported by the lower, was, however, very slightly pointed and prominent, and perhaps a thought too long; defects partially concealed by his thick, curling moustache, worn "à la militaire," and in those days considered a decided foppery, if not an absolute innovation on popular American usages. The teeth were fine and characteristic; they gave strange beauty to his rare and solemn smile, and seemed made for expression, even more than mastication. His complexion was of a bronzed pallor, naturally fair, no doubt, from the hue of his brow and throat, when glimpses of this last were revealed, on later inspection. His hands and feet were good, but not remarkable; "natural, not obvious," as somebody said of style or what it ought to be, and as every gentleman's extremities should be, I think. His voice very pleasant, though somewhat monotonously low. His whole appearance distinguished, in the best sense of the word; but neither brilliant nor striking; with great repose of manner, at first often mistaken for mere self-possession, permeating and characterizing all.

I thought him, from the first, an eminently handsome man; the rest found him merely good-looking and gentlemanly. So much for variety of tastes. He "filled my eye," as the saying is, which suffices. However, it was to my diary alone I committed my earliest impressions of Captain Wentworth. I find there this entry, made a few days later, during which time we had scarcely interchanged a

word, yet it seemed afterwards were mutually observant if not pleased with and interested in one another.

"The Chief Engineer has arrived, and is to remain at Beauseincourt for the New-Year's festivities, after which he goes into camp, and declines all farther hospitalities. This is his programme, as understood. I find myself studying this man from the beginning of our acquaintance, as I have never done any one else, except Colonel Lavigne, perhaps; yet they are very different—two men were never more so. For surely in the proud, serene, and, at times, somewhat severe countenance of this new-comer, there could lurk nothing sinister or mysterious, or morbid. The sound of his voice, too, is like the ring of tested coin, and I confide in his truth instinctively. Yet are there evidences of the reaction of tides about him, so to speak, as when the sea has gone back to its bed, its traces remain on the hill-tops. He is one who has suffered, in order to grow strong; and now, perhaps, has become too strong for suffering. A remarkable calmness and reticence seem to surround him with an almost impassable barrier. He is either a man who has loved to callousness, or who has never loved at all,—can never love. One trembles to think, though, of the fire that may burn within a stone sarcophagus. Yet, after all, he may be a married man, with a quiver full of arrows. He is quite old enough, and it certainly is not, can never be, any concern of mine, whether he is double or single. I despise overweening curiosity; I blush at my own conjectures."

(Later.) "It seemed, after all, that Captain Wentworth has earned his mustache legitimately. He has been living for ten years in Russia, assisting to construct railroads for the Czar. I heard him tell Colonel Lavigne this, giving him also some very interesting accounts of the steppes, and their still undeveloped resources. His words are finely chosen, very simple, though his sentences drop from his quiet lips like gems. I have never heard any one converse more eloquently, yet with less effort and ostentation. His life has been a hard one, I imagine, and has killed out all extravagance. With what a mild derision, so to speak, he listens to Major Favrand! Yet they seem very well pleased to be together. He is not fond of ladies' society, evidently. At this I cannot wonder; just now we are all very dull, more than usually uninteresting. This dreary weather has done

its work, at last; I have seldom been so downcast; I cannot rally. All the bitter past comes back to me; all the hopelessness of the future crowds upon me; I can but muse and weep, when my time is not devoted to my duties, light in this week of holiday, thank Heaven, else I scarcely know how I could well perform or sustain them.

"Madam Lavigne is oppressed by her delayed preparations; the girls are restless in anticipation of coming festivities and company, of which, poor things they truly see but little. The wires are all jangling. I have never felt so entirely alone, since I came to Beauseincourt. All that made Christmas dear to me has vanished, all — with father, sister, home, indulgent friends. The fiends possess my Paradise."

In a mood like this, it may be well imagined I had little disposition to form a nearer acquaintance with the guest of the establishment, nor did it indeed seem worth while, under the circumstances, to make much effort to break the ice of strangeness. He was to go to his employment immediately after New-Year's Day, when the rest of his staff would be up from Savannah. Mr. Gregory, with whom, so far, he had no personal acquaintance, would then join and assist him to form his plans and resolutions. It interested me to observe him; it would bore me to entertain; and thus it rested.

The ancient and well-established proverb of "l'homme propose et Dieu dispose," was never more clearly illustrated than in this instance; for after refusing courteously, yet very decidedly, Colonel Lavigne's pressing invitation to remain his guest until spring (when greater facilities in his profession, and less exposure to weather would both, he was assured, better prosper his undertaking), Captain Wentworth became, through the force of circumstances, as shall be seen, an unwilling prisoner for weeks, nay months, under the roof of his present host, and at a time when the current of popular feeling setting so strong towards him now was completely altered, and turned aside.

But let me not anticipate; all this will be related presently. In the meantime, much that is unpleasant, perhaps even tedious, must be quietly endured. I must tell my tale in my own way, weary but patient reader, and if interrupted, perhaps like the old woman of the nursery, "go back and begin my story again at the beginning;" so beware how you break its thread.

CHAPTER IX.

VERY suddenly, as if from some rare caprice, the sun threw off his veil of mist and cloud, and the sandy and porous soil, sucking eagerly in its reserve of nutriment, soon lost all traces of its recent inundation. The weather that heralded the new year was exquisite, — a Cordelia, as it seemed to me, laying a loving hand on the head of the dreary Lear, not yet quite mad from adversity. All nature seemed alive again, and in the universal rejoicing I felt my own sad heart awake to renewed life, ever sensuously sensitive to such influences, as it had proved itself from childhood up, and in full sympathy therewith.

Birds were singing in the cedar thickets, as if in spring greeting; paroquets chattering in the half-dismantled groves; doves cooing in the copses, where the myrtle and dwarf magnolia and Petasporum were always verdant. Among the dark leaves of the ivy that covered densely the gables of the house of Beauseincourt, new ones of smaller size and more tender green were quickly visible. Rosebuds were induced to change their minds, and expand into perfect flowers with magical celerity, instead of mildewing in unclosed celibacy beneath the constant rains, or shrivelling up with cold into floral mummies; while verbenas, the name of which was legion in that land, again reached out their tender, green runners, as happy infants extend their hands across the bosom of their nursing mothers, and threw up to light their variegated panicles. The azalia unclosed her large, fair eyes meekly in the shrubbery, and the great, black honeysuckle that concealed one of the porches with its dark, evergreen foliage, opened its white, fragrant tubes and showered forth its frankincense. Even the pyrus japonica was stirred through its shining mail to give forth a few blood-red blossoms, the faint promise of its final harvest, when, like the household of the wise woman described by Solomon, it should stand forth clothed in scarlet, to meet

the smile of spring. Just now it reminded me more of Robin Hood's men in Lincoln green after a pretty sharp conflict and spattering of foemen's blood.

"So this is your Southern spring, Madge," I had said, when this vernal glory first prevailed over the land in sudden splendor.

"Spring! oh, dear, no; we shall have months of bad weather yet, perhaps. Did you imagine our winter was only a week in length? Prepare yourself for the worst; you have yet to see Beauseincourt with the horrors. The climate of Georgia, this part of it at least, has its dumps, like Bertie. The everlasting pattering of rain on that slate roof is a thing, 'to dream of, not to tell,' as your favorite Coleridge says; and the dampness penetrates to your very bones, 'nay, the marrow thereof,' as father has it, when he complains of rheumatism. The clothes you lay away get mouldy in your drawers; gloves and silks are speckled as if they had been sprinkled with sea-water; the very leaves of books stick together, and streams of damp run down the walls of all unused rooms."

"Madge, what a picture of your climate!"

"You will never stand it, I fear, Miss Harz; for, if your spirits give way after one week's rain, what will they do in eight? Work it by the rule of three, and you will have your answer: elope or commit suicide, of course."

"Not a bit of it, Madge; we will make our sunshine. You know what your sweet song says, —

'We brought our summer with us.'

"Big fires and good company are next to sunshine, you know. Ay, better sometimes for soul-warmth."

"Yes, Miss Harz. But where in the name of sense, after this one week's festivities, is the good company to come from? If you can, tell me that," she asked, dolefully.

"Are we not a host in ourselves, Madge? We will have a concert once a week, dramatic readings twice, cards and games and dancing on the intervening evenings; and that I may join in the last, instead of drumming my fingers off for others eternally, Colonel Lavigne shall order up 'Bones,' and the fiddles and banjo from the quarters. There, now, what do you say to that? Then our sewing society, and singing-school for the darkies, that your mother pro-

posed, you remember, will quite finish the rest of the time; that is, when lessons are over."

"Oh, yes, that will be charming," derisively. "Besides," and she hesitated here very earnestly, "It *is* barely possible that Mr. Gregory may stay here, you know, a part of the time (I had forgotten that). There is a Mr. Charles Vernon to come also, Captain Wentworth says, who may be induced to join us occasionally, and some one else, I forget whom, — Yorke, I believe, — all quite young gentlemen; not stern and sad and middle-aged, like Captain Wentworth."

"Middle-aged, Madge? He seems quite a young man to me. How old do you take him to be?"

"Why, thirty-three, at the least," opening her large gray eyes; "and you know how little sympathy men of that age feel for girls of ours."

"True, true: he is not quite old enough to appreciate youth for its own sake, as he would do were he ten years older, and a little too old for a contemporary of youth. A very unfortunate time of life, certainly.

"You smile, but it is true, Miss Harz, and we all think it very hard that you should stay up stairs so much and throw the whole burden of entertaining him on our hands. He does not make the slightest distinction in his attentions between Marion, me, and Bertie; and as to Laura and Louey, he absolutely prefers them to any of us, strange as that may appear."

"A confirmed old bachelor, evidently," I said, much amused at her heartfelt complaints.

"I fear so," rejoined Madge, with simplicity. "Instead of telling us the fashions of foreign lands, and anecdotes of people he has seen, and about the courts and operas, he lectures us on optics and astronomy, and examines us on history. It is perfectly insupportable. It is true Bertie drew it all out by her questions and impertinences, but he ought to have had more consideration for Marion and myself. How different is Mr. Gregory!" with a profound sigh and shake of the head.

"I am sorry your guest bores you so. I will do my best to-morrow to relieve you, for I am beginning to rise to my level again after a week's depression."

"What a weather-glass you are, Miss Harz!"

"It is not altogether that, Madge, I am convinced it is

not, that has so sorely oppressed me. Never mind; it is over now, and it shall not be my fault if the shadow falls again."

Alas! what heart can defy presentiment? The loom of destiny may be at work, as the "sagas" tell us it is, in the heart of creation; but the ear of instinct and prescience, finely attuned, will catch sometimes the sound of the discordant shuttles, when there is question of its own peculiar warp and woof, however remote it may be from the centre of all. Thus may it have fared with me, when that mood of unappeasable gloom fell over me for a season, — that spell of Saul: I can no way else define it.

I knew, as Madge had disclosed in simple parlance, that they had "all thought hard of me" at Beauseincourt, for not assisting them in their hour of need to entertain their inopportune guest. Colonel Lavigne, even, fond as he was of the absolute command of his own time, had scowled several times darkly upon me when I made a motion to withdraw; and Madame Lavigne more than once had plead the urgency of her employments.

Selfishly, as it seemed, had I so far resisted the wishes of my hosts; but the truth was, I had been too sad even to explain my sadness, or make it a pretext to others, — too much cast down to care what any one thought of my conduct; an unusual mood with me, and one that startled even my own experience.

Bertie was the only person who had not seemed to take notice of my behavior, and who reproved the rest for speaking of me as "moody," as Madame Lavigne herself told me, later, with tears in her eyes, when conviction and remorse had come to her hand in hand.

"She is always your defender," she then said, "when your back is turned, whatever she may be in your presence."

But I anticipate in recording this confession here; it was the fruit of later circumstances. At the time I write of, no allowances were made for my "peculiar and disobliging demeanor," as Colonel Lavigne saw fit to term my nameless wretchedness, a mood forgiven, however, as soon as it passed away, even by those who had felt aggrieved by its presence.

True to my promise, on the morning succeeding this conversation (one of extreme housewifely anxiety, I knew, to Madame Lavigne, for on this day every chamber was to be

severally inspected, and the final touch to toilets and tables, and the festooning of curtains, quite a fine art at Beauseincourt, given by her own graceful fingers), I descended to the sitting-room, knitting-work in hand, for the especial purpose of "entertaining" Captain Wentworth, a cut-and-dried occupation that I naturally shrank from. Why it should have been deemed necessary, under the circumstances, to undertake this task at all, I could not very well see; but I knew that it was one of Madame Lavigne's hospitable superstitions that her guests should be treated like idiots or lunatics, and never for one moment be left to their own devices, for fear of serious consequences, probably, to life or limb.

I smiled as I thought how greatly, in all probability, this thoughtful, grave, and cultivated man — for his face indicated all of these things — would have preferred the grand old library, with all its discrepancies (to which free access was afforded him), to the society of the shallow person now appointed to entertain him.

I met Sylphy on the platform of the stairs as I was descending them, coming in quest of me, with an urgent message from Madame Lavigne, to the effect that as Uncle Quimbo and the "Lumberbus" had at last arrived, she must go in person to superintend the unpacking of her precious load of delicacies, and see to their disposition, as well as to some of those nicer culinary operations, which it was high time should be commenced in preparation for the now speedily expected guests.

An' its more dan Missus dar do," said Sylphy, with great spirit, "to lebe Massa Walter's' ticklerest fren' in de settin-room by his lone self; and Miss Marion, she's shet up wid Clare in de bes' chamber, alterin' of her new dress, wat Mrs. Dart spilt in de waist; and as fur Miss Madge, I heered her say she was boun' to res' dis mornin' or die for it; so she's dun gone fas' to sleep. Miss Bertie, — she's noffin but a chile hersef, you know, Miss Miriam, haf de time talkin ob foolishness, an' tellin' more dan she knows. An' as to Laura and Louey, dey's enuff to wear out de patience ob a missionary or a settin' hen, dey is; an' I's gwine straight to Missus myself, bout some ob dere recum-behavior, I is dat."

"Sylphy, don't you see you are only detaining me with your threats and explanations?" I remonstrated, half provoked by her stream of prattle: "I am going straight down to sit with Captain Wentworth now, if you will let me pass, and I hope your Mistress will feel relieved."

"You looks mighty well in dat red chintz dress, Miss Mirime, wid de white cuffs and collar an' gold pin, an' your little scalloped black-silk apron. When you's done wid dat gown, Miss Mirime" —

"Yes, yes, Sylphy, it shall be yours, of course ; but let me pass now ; " and in another moment the obstruction of her person was removed, and I found myself in the presence of the guest and his hostess, the latter of whom wore that resigned look of martyrdom that shot ten thousand arrows to my reproachful conscience.

Captain Wentworth rose as I entered, and advanced a chair for me, without entirely abandoning his own, to which he returned after I had been seated ; and a few minutes later, Madame Lavigne, in her turn, rose gracefully, and with a few parting remarks, prepared to withdraw from the scene of her self-sacrifice.

"I hope you will be able, Captain Wentworth," she said, benignly, "to pass a few pleasant hours, kill time, at least, in the absence of my husband. It will not be very long, I trust, before he will return to resume his post. In the meantime, Miss Harz has kindly consented to take my place, and you two must try and get better acquainted."

So saying, with a pleasant smile and bow, she retired, leaving her kindly Parthian dart to rankle; for these remarks were, as might have been supposed, ill-calculated to remove the nameless restraint that already existed between Captain Wentworth and myself. Strangely enough, however, they proved to have the very opposite effect from the one most probable, and unlocked the ice of our previous congelation, for we both happened to look up and smile at the same moment, and from the same impression. I shook my head slightly at the indiscretion of which I had been guilty, for I surely had no wish nor right to deride the well-intended want of tact that amused us both ; yet my behavior might have been construed differently, I knew, impulsive and involuntary as it was.

"That quaint little explanation opens a whole volume to me on the subject of social estimates in this region," said Captain Wentworth, still smiling. "Southern ideas seem truly oriental, and man retains here his ancient prerogative, now almost fabulous in Christian countries, of being first considered in all relations, even those of a tête à tête. I can imagine Colonel Lavigne in your chair, and draw the

contrast. He is very obliging to-day," bending his head slightly.

"You must make allowance for a wife's partiality. Madame Lavigne always finds him agreeable and forgets how much of this is due to her affection. He is, however, without exaggeration, a well-informed, original man, and very edifying in his way."

"In his way! Yes, I perceive the truth of your estimate. It was only the implied comparison I cavilled at."

"Believe me, Madame Lavigne intended nothing more than a polite apology for entrusting the entertainment of a valued guest to a passing stranger," I responded.

"Doubting this, the remark would not have amused me," he rejoined gravely, "I looked upon what she said as a characteristic instance of feminine humility, — that was all, — such as we find to exist alone in patriarchal countries."

"Yet nowhere else have I seen men more chivalric than in the South," I replied, "albeit so self-indulged. The two conflict so far as to render them somewhat impatient of the restraints they never throw aside in female society, and the result is they paradoxically prefer liberty and one another. Madame Lavigne forgot you were a Northern man."

"But I am not a Northern man, having been born in Virginia and partly reared there, — only a cosmopolite 'with a heart for every fate.' I enjoy very much the simplicity and purity of this Southern domestic life. It is like a glimpse of Eden to me to look into the depths of a household like this, — so virtuous, so well ordered. The mother so pure and ladylike; the daughters so bright and fair and dutiful. No wonder that the son has a crystalline nature, after such training, if it may indeed be called training, where mere example does all."

"Is Walter very handsome, Captain Wentworth?" I questioned.

"Yes. Achilles in his adolescence might have looked like him. 'The flower of chivalry,' as his fellows call him on shipboard, 'The knight of the Southern cross.' Do you comprehend him now?"

"I think so. Does he resemble either parent?

"I cannot see that he does. Miss Marion is more like him than any of the rest, with the exception of little Louey, perhaps."

I thought I knew, from this admission, what manner of physiognomy Walter Lavigne possessed. There was nothing characteristic about either of those fair-faced sisters of his. He was probably a pretty man merely, a style I especially eschewed.

I had hoped to find him more like Bertie," I said, impulsively: "her type is the more masculine one."

In that heroic strain that runs in both natures there is resemblance, not outwardly, however," he rejoined. "Colonel Lavigne has been thrilling me with an account of Miss Bertie's conduct, by the way, in that bear peril of his. It reminds me of Walter's daring feat in the Bay of Odessa, when, to save the life of a simple seaman, he hazarded his own by plunging into the waters, literally 'accoutred as he was.' He rescued the man at desperate odds and unhesitatingly. I never shall forget the scene, nor the boy's unconscious innocence as to the part he had played. My heart was his from that moment. He is naïvete personified."

"Was this the beginning of your acquaintance?"

"It was. Our was a very short one at best, close as it proved. I happened to be thrown on his ship as far as the Bermudas. But he is a volume one reads easily and rapidly and I believe I knew him better in that time than many men I have passed years among. I have never encountered any being with a more transparent nature or a more knightly sense of honor. Palamon or Arcite themselves were not more high-hearted than Lavigne.

"I am truly glad to hear you say this. He seems to be such an idol in his family."

"A family I scarcely expected to see, when he forced his letters of introduction into my hand, as I frankly told him. But circumstances have shaped my course since then so as to make this neighborhood my goal for the present; and, to crown my good fortune, it seems Walter himself is to be at home in the spring on furlough, when I shall try to be his guest for a little while at the Refuge. In the meantime I need not repine."

"Bertie has described this place to me as a perfect eagle's cairn," I rejoined; "perched as it is upon the highest hill of Lesdernier, a rustic lodge, such as the Douglas dwelt in, according to Scott, among the meres and mountains of Scotland, overlooking a swamp as it does, a lake,

and a great extent of country, and literally wreathed with roses and multiflora vines. A perfect nest of beauty. I mean to steal a glimpse of it myself before Walter comes home, if possible, — in early spring."

"Why was it called the Refuge?" he demanded.

"The family were obliged to leave home on account of an epidemic on one occasion and Colonel Lavigne fitted up a disused hunting-lodge for their reception in the height of Lesdernier; hence the name, so Bertie tells me. A few hundreds of picturesque, but perfectly worthless acres lie around the tenement; and this is Walter's estate. Bertie laughs very much at the vision of their future housekeeping there together."

"What a strange child she is, to be sure, that Bertie Lavigne of yours," he mused. "Robertina, they call her, she tells me, after some Huguenot ancestress, from whom, perhaps, as well, she received this heroic strain of character of hers. I cannot think it comes to her very directly," and he bent his speaking eyes upon me. "To be plain with you," he continued, "I do not perceive in either parent, as far as I can judge of them on a short acquaintance, the possession of such remarkable elements. Walter and Bertie must have gone far back, as far as the days of the Frônde perchance, to seek their source; for I read that in those wars the Lavignes fought valiantly. Thus you see how 'the bread thrown on the waters,' after many days is found again. Is this your theory of races, Miss Harz?"

"Partly so; to some degree realized in my own case, perhaps," I answered. "The clash of the Hebrew cymbals is not altogether unfamiliar to my dreaming ear. I always hear it when I have any great work to do."

"I marked that Oriental possibility from the first," he observed. "And was Miriam truly an ancestress of yours?" and he smiled at his own quaint inquiry.

I looked up with grave earnestness as I made reply; for I felt the slight derision of his words, and resented it.

"I do not know. I hope so; for as you have learned, I suppose, my name too is Miriam. But that is slender ground for claiming kin of such distinction, such remoteness."

"Miriam, — Miriam Harz," he murmured softly, absently, bending above his chair, and I was conscious of his gaze, though my eyes were upon the purse I was netting,

and my lips moved mechanically, counting the stitches as though I heard him not. It thrilled me in some inexplicable way to hear him murmuring my name, or part of my name, in that familiar, absent, dreamy manner. Alas! would he ever know the patronymic I thought so noble? Would I ever be to him other than the "children's governess," as Colonel Lavigne so frequently called me? Would he some day recognize in me the daughter of the proudest man that ever drew breath of life and the representative of the long line that claimed their descent from Simon de Montfort, himself the regulator of kings?

"But why should I care," in the next moment I asked myself, "what estimate this stranger may place upon me? What is he to me? what can he, *need* he ever be?" and my eyes resumed their serenity as I raised them to his face and said, digressively, —

"I believe you and Bertie have become very well acquainted in the last few days. Has she revealed herself perfectly to you?"

"I cannot tell. She has by no means the angelic transparency of her brother, so to speak, and may be a little inscrutable. One thing impressed me strangely, I confess. I ventured to request an account from her own mouth of the bruin adventure. I fancied to hear it in the first person in that sweet, vibrant voice and from those fresh lips of hers. But she winced terribly; then suddenly turning pale and covering her face with her hands, absolutely quivering with excitement, fled from my presence. Since then, of course, no allusion has been made to this subject of her heroism on my part. But this display of vivid emotion struck me as extraordinary, if not affected, and as something that ought in either case to be controlled."

"It is something that cannot be controlled," I replied, "nor even explained perhaps. The philosophy of the thing may be this, however: Bertie is a child of such imagination, that memory too vividly reproduces past peril, exaggerates it, even, so that she who met the reality bravely shrinks before the semblance. The dream is harder to bear than the truth. Can you not conceive of such a state of things?"

"I can," he answered gloomily. "Indeed it is a question with me sometimes whether we might not with advantage have been so constituted as to wipe clean, or tear out from

the volume of life, such pages of memory as we will to destroy, — a wretched childhood, for instance, or a bootless youth, — and commence afresh again, without the clog of reminiscence to embarrass us, and with only the consciousness of a chosen portion of our lives."

"I understand your idea," I said, and how it might obtain in some cases; but to me it seems that such a power of proceeding would ill answer the divine purposes of our being. We should become epicurean at once in our ideas and efface too willingly from the tablets of our brain, all painful recollections, however profitable to our welfare these might be. Progress of soul would I fear be at a stand-still, were your idea verified."

"How can you prove such memories profitable?" he asked. "What advantage is there in bearing about a millstone, an incubus, through life, — in setting a skeleton at every feast? No: better to be born again in oblivion." And his gloomy brow betrayed an inward strife.

"Could we but think so," I pursued, after a pause, "it is from the retrospect of suffering that we gather most of our strength to endure, and caution to avoid. How else should we learn 'How divine a thing it is to suffer and grow strong.'"

"You do not agree then with Tennyson, this new English bard, whose wing already has dared so majestic a flight, 'that a sorrow's crown of sorrow, is remembering happier things'? That is not your creed?"

"No, no, indeed! It is joy to some spirits, even in their grief, to remember past rapture."

"The Desert of Sahara" he said vaguely, "was once, we are told, a sea filled with organic life, vestiges of which remain buried among the sand-drifts; but the waters are gone forever, nor shall they ever return again to refresh its solitary wastes. What avails such a deposit of relics, save to satisfy the cravings of science or the misgivings of the philosopher? So memory retains the mere shell of the realities long since departed — after the floods of emotion have subsided and nothing remains to sensation but arid poverty — the desert sand and the crust of decayed life. It is all very unsatisfactory to my mind. Jesus said 'Let the dead bury their dead,' you remember, where there was question of hesitation on the path of duty. And what is the past in most cases, but a clog upon one's energies and a

vexation of spirit? I say 'Amen' with all my heart as these words apply to the corses of memory. Let them be entombed, and let the march be onward to the end of all."

"This application as to Christ's words is an imperfect one, it seems to me," I rejoined. "It is not in the same way we two interpret this mystical command of our Saviour. I believe it referred alone to that useless repining over what is gone forever, — those unavailing regrets for the past that hamper our energies and unfit us for our duties. It is wrong — it is weak, I know — to indulge in these. We should put them away as sternly as the Greeks ostracized their effete heroes. Ay, if it be necessary, in order to be done with them, slay them with our own hands even as the Moor did Desdemona, though our hearts die in the effort. Even sorrow (the holy of holies while it abides in its allotted and reasonable limits) must be dealt with after this fashion, should it survive its season, or transcend its boundaries. All this I know, and mournfully acknowledge as my law.

"But, as we value our own souls, we must *remember;* for memory is a principal ingredient in immortality. Oblivion *is* annihilation. What were our conception of heaven worth without such association? Would heaven be at all as we imagine it? Think of the meeting hereafter without recognition, — the child passing the mother by, the father the child, the husband the wife, the brother the sister, in vague, unsympathizing strangeness, in utter oblivion and ignorance. Oh! how delightful it must be, even in the land of spirits, to recognize the face, the glance we loved so well on earth; and which even the grave could not teach us to forget! Surely this is a dear privilege."

"You are an enthusiast, Miss Harz, — I saw it at a glance, — and destined, therefore, to bear the bitter burden of disappointment in all its fulness!" In truth, I now sat trembling and emotional before him.

"And you are a prophet of ill omen, I am afraid; yet, I believe and fear, a correct one, in my case," I answered gravely, after I had recovered myself.

"May Heaven grant that I prove a false one, rather than that oracle of mine should cause you sorrow!" he said half earnestly, adding after a pause, in playful but gentle accents, "I have merely been reading you, after all, — it is a way I have sometimes, — drawing you out, in my own fashion, by means of one of my pet theories. It is long

since I met with a truly enthusiastic spirit, such as yours. False enthusiasm there is enough in the world, God knows! Frigid fire, cold as phosphorus and equally incommunicable; 'Will of the wisp' fanaticism that leads to nothing better than marsh and mire. But yours is sunflame. Truly, I am glad that in pursuance of Madame Lavigne's parting injunction, we two are rapidly growing better acquainted."

"Thank you," I said coldly. "Perhaps after all, Madame Lavigne's injunction wants fulfilment, and your powers of discrimination are at fault. I am not so easily read as you imagine."

My "amour propre" was touched by his singular scrutiny, his condescension of manner and remark born of the habit of his solitary life, perhaps, his nonchalance.

"Pardon me if I still adhere to my first impression," he rejoined, quietly taking up a book as he spoke which lay beside him and opening it. After a moment he closed and laid it down again. It was a recent Life of Washington.

"No man is great without enthusiasm, nor woman either," he said, looking up suddenly from the volume over which his eye had glanced; "but there is such a thing as sustained enthusiasm, and that means genius wherever it may be found, although it does not always pass for such, as in the case of Washington, for instance."

"Washington! I thought he wanted it altogether, Captain Wentworth. The creative power is an essential of genius, and this even his worshippers deny to him, great as he unquestionably was."

"We cannot measure him by the common mortal standard of genius. His was a sphered perfection. In his wonderful organization, enthusiasm was subordinate, as fire is contained, we are taught, in the heart of the earth, which still revolves its course in order and without any obvious manifestation of its internal heat. Nay, even with eternal snows crowning a portion of its surface. Your flimsy electric cloud is more demonstrative, but ends by casting forth its fires and disappearing in vapor."

"But in what manner did Washington prove his genius, Captain Wentworth? It is of that there is question now, if I understand you."

"By fulfilling his mission. What would you have had him do beyond? Paint a picture, or choir an oratorio, or compose a poem, or fight one or two brilliant battles? Did

Christ do these things, God's chosen representative on earth? (You see at once that I am Unitarian, Miss Harz.) Or should an angel set his foot on this globe, would evidences like these be demanded or expected from him to prove his genius? Yet who could doubt, knowing him fresh from God, that he could perform works even of this kind beyond aught man has ever imagined or comprehended, if he so willed it or thereto condescended, or discredit that he came for a great purpose, which, difficult or not, he would certainly accomplish?"

"Success is genius, then, in your estimation?"

"When God-directed, surely. They are by no means inseparable however; I should be sorry to say this."

"Then you acknowledge genius may exist without success?" I was weaving paradoxes now.

"To some extent I do. The noblest, sweetest, most gifted natures fail frequently for want of that sphered perfection which in its fulness bears to the common observer no evidence of genius, because of its consummate consistency and equality of power. It seems a commonplace thing enough to make a rose: yet, what an evidence of marvellous genius it is, — mere matter of course, as we consider it. Could any human skill put together again the perfect flower you have just pulled to pieces and scattered at your feet and make it what it was? Could Shakespeare have accomplished a miracle like this? and yet we call his genius divine. Is not creation genius?"

"I have never thought before of God's genius, I confess. It has seemed a human attribute to me until now. I see what you mean too about Washington. I think I have a glimpse of Jove behind that marble face of his, said to have been usually so immobile."

"A watch-tower does not shiver in a storm like a tree, yet lightning may rend it to the base. Minds like Washington's (the demi-god mould of the Greek) are not readily convulsed by emotion, and the face is but the mirror of the mind. Yet that grand countenance, methinks, may have had its rare occasions of storm and sunshine; though man, it is said, never saw him weep nor smile in the fixed grandeur of his mood. It takes great incidents to agitate such a man, — such a face, — lightning to rend the watch-tower against which waves beat vainly. Yet no doubt, he felt profoundly."

"And Napoleon, his too was genius," I said.

"His too was genius, undoubtedly, yet without the sphered perfection of Washington's, and thus it appears more prominently before the eyes of men than if rounded out with all sustaining qualities. Judgment, fortitude, perseverence, patience, — these in him were more or less wanting and imperfect. Besides, he accomplished nothing for all time."

"I, too, love and admire the character of Washington; but I never thought of him before as a man of genius," I could not help repeating. After all, *what* did he create?"

"He built up a nation, a Michael Angelo fashioned a temple. Which was the greater creation? He erected his wondrous fabric, too, of scant and slight materials, and fixed it in granite strength. Does any man seem to have accomplished greater ends, with slenderer means? What did Napoleon do to compare with this — what did Cæsar? It ill behooves an American, Miss Harz, to dispute the genius of Washington. It was godlike. I sometimes feel that it would have overwhelmed me but to have looked upon him, as in reflecting on Jesus Christ, I think but to have seen or heard him speak, must have killed me."

These last words indeed seemed self-addressed almost, spoken as they were in tones tender and low, and with such deep reverence by those Unitarian lips, and for a time there was silence between us, broken at last somewhat irreverently, perhaps, or at least in an undue spirit of levity, I fear, by the question, "Who is enthusiastic now, Captain Wentworth?"

He started, smiled, as if aroused from reverie, then answered, simply, "I have my bursts of enthusiasm, I acknowledge, when thrown with enthusiasts like yourself, but usually I am cold and commonplace enough in all my estimates of life and philosophy, to satisfy the merest utilitarian, as even you will find to your infinite weariness, after you know me better. All the more do I love to see women fervent and natural. They are the flowers of humanity; we, its rocks, you know. And for them are rain and sunshine profitable, which affect us little."

"Aaron once smote a rock, and living waters gushed out of it," I rejoined carelessly. "Was that allegorically meant, do you suppose, as an illustration of what some men's souls are capable of when the right wand is used?"

"It depends upon the hand that wields it," he replied in a manner so significant that I was fain to fly the subject.

A few moments later the bell rang and we proceeded together to the table, no time being admitted of, after this last summons, for the usual change of dress, a ceremonial somewhat insisted on at Beauseincourt, even if a dingy silk were the successor of a radiant calico. "Such was the custom at Branksome Hall," and all obeyed it.

I had made but little progress with my purse, I found on examination, but thoroughly "knitted up the ravelled sleeve," not of care only, but of a new acquaintance, which I had half dreaded to form. And strange to say, whether from some remote association of ideas, reaching back perhaps, after Bertie's theory, to a past existence, or from a congeniality not yet perfectly recognized, or from an untraced resemblance to some one long ago known and half forgotten,* I could never again realize the fact, that to me Captain Wentworth was the mere acquaintance of an hour, and not the friend of a lifetime.

I would have trusted him that day, as entirely as I would have done months afterwards with my life, my property, the honor of my house even; all save my secrets and my affections. These I reserved sacredly, for the present at least.

* It is as well here to explain that this gentleman was indeed a distant relative, out of which unacknowledged fact grew later some tangling of the skeins of my history, all finally adjusted and satisfactorily disposed of however. This elucidation is due to the reader, who, from the stringency of my limits, will not be suffered in this volume to follow my clue of story to the goal (always so desirable) of a just conclusion. Those who care to know the remainder of this history may readily do so, however, by pursuing Milton's suggestion to —

"Call up him who left half told
The story of Cambuscan bold,"

and demanding a sequel which shall be duly forthcoming after such summons.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN Sylphy came to aid to undress me, on that evening, the fluency of her speech was as irresistable as a waterfall. Talk she would and did, as if inspired to do so by a pythonic tripod. In times of unusual culinary preparation I have often observed this enthusiasm of commnnication to take possession of the females of her race, as if the nostril wherewith they snuff up the fine odors of propitiatory cates were the readiest avenues to inspire and inform their brains.

"Uncle Quimbo come mighty near losing his load at Lenoir's Crossin', and de Lord only knows what Mistus would have done if dem mules had not pulled froo. De ole man hissef mighty bad off wid de rhumatis' sence he done come home, — along of gittin' so wet and habbin' such a heap of trouble. One keg of almonds floated away and a demijohn of liquor gone by de board, he say, before his bery eyes. But we hab a plenty lef' — thanks to de gracious King! All de boxes of oranges, lemons and West Indy sweetmeats, and de baskets of pine-apples and champagne wines, and bananas, and de Dutch cheeses, and pickles, an' fancy cakes an' candies an' dates is all come safe and soun'. I has been helpin' to put 'em away in de storeroom wid my own two blessed han's; and Mistus done made de sparklingest jelly you ever seed, Miss Mirime, out of little scraps and chips of stuff like glass what comes in paper boxes, Aunt Felicité, she says um noffen' but fish-scales — but it don't smell dat way, nohow — and ders all sorts of tin cases, come from France, in Paris, Jura says, full ob little fox grape patties, lobsters, and Perrygog pies, and scrimps, and pink salmon fish, and oysters, all as fresh as if jes' caught out of de salt water brine. I does wonder how dey does 'serve dem fixin's. And Madame Curzon, — cause she couldn't come to de dinner, nor the General neider, — to testify deir respekful regrets, Jura says, she

sent down de splendidest cake wat ebber my two speritual eyes rested on, baked in a castle mould, de new style, — de Sumpter mould, King says dey call it at Sabannah, — frosted on the outside (but we hasn't stuck a knife into it yet, to see wat it looks like underneaf de icin'), and wid parrotpets and case-ons and a little gold gun to fit in ebbery one; and sugar soldiers on the rampants; and its called a Calhoun cake, by de nullification quality (all de poor white folks is Jackson trash in dese parts, you knows, Miss Mirime) and nobody but me and Mistus, and Aunt Felicité, and Jura, and Miss Bertie has had a sight ob dat cake yet; and, please ma'am, Miss Mirime, don't tell dat I spoke to you ob de matter, for its a 'found secret and Aunt Felicité, she,"— peering round to see my face as she spoke, —

"Be still, Sylphy," I interrupted, "don't presume to come to me with household mysteries. I shall see the cake soon enough, I suppose. Now light the taper, and 'vamose' speedily."

"Oh, Miss Mirime, I tought my breas' 'ud bust if I could not tell some one 'bout dat cake. It runs in my head like cotton-flyin's. Ise dyin' to see de inside ob it, and know wat it tastes like, you'd better believe. I s'pose Miss Bertie dun tole you all about it before she 'posed hersef to sleep, you takes it so easy?"

"No, indeed, your Miss Bertie knows better than to come to me with her mother's affairs. But go now, Sylphy; it is late and you had better be in bed. You know to-morrow is to be a busy day, we shall all be needed."

"You needn't tell me nuffen 'bout dat, honey;" and she still lingered, fidgeting around the room.

"What do you want, Sylphy? There is something, I am sure," I said, looking up from the book I was reading, — Mrs Shelley's beautiful new novel, of "Falkner;" the only book I ever read that made its dénouement turn on gratitude, and thrice precious to me, if only for this peculiarity of morals.

"Does you want dat pink shally dress of yourn any more Miss Miriam, wid bows down de front? I spied a berry bad damp stain on one ob de slebes, wen I was airin' dem garmens of yourn las' week out ob de bureau, an' I has tree dollars to pay down now, an more after de new year's comin in" — and she literally began to grope in her pocket.

"Nonsense, Sylphy; you shall have the dress if you want

it. How dare you offer to pay me for cast-off clothing?" I asked sternly.

"Oh! but Miss Miriam, we all knows you has to make your libbin by readin' an writin' and such like poor doins — like Mr. Doremus, an' he nebber had a dime to spare to black or white, — an' he sole all his old coats an' breeches to Uncle Jura, an' traded off a silver watch for a colt, an' "—

"Never mind, Sylphy, what that old Scotchman did," I interrupted, seeing her embarrassment and the hobble she was fast getting into by dint of "odorous" comparisons, — "go now. You shall have the dress to-morrow. It is packed away in a trunk at this time, and stay, — you shall have my white silk bonnet as well."

"O my dear Miss Mirime!" kissing my hand fervently, "no wonder you looks so queenly like. Captain Wentworth, he say to Mistus (I heerd him wid my own two precious ears) dat young lady hab de 'air noble,' and den he say you berry much like some frien ob his'n, wat libbed at Rome ob latter days (we passed tru dat place wen we went down to Augusta last May, — Miss Marion an' me; but it aint much now, for a town, I tells *you*), but wat used to lib down at Palmyra, (Jura he dun been dar too, an' he knows de highest quality in dat settlement), de 'Queen Zenoby' — I took partickler notice of dat name; it kind er sounded grand in my ears all day. Is she kinsfolk ob yourn? Is she French or English, Miss Mirime?"

"No, no, indeed Sylphy," I said laughing: "I believe not; but I shall read my new book with fresh interest," I murmured, "after such a suggestion."

It was lying uncut in my drawer, one Marion had given me on Christmas day, — Ware's "Letters from Palmyra," so celebrated in their time, and unjustly forgotten now, for their artistic finish is beyond all praise, and defies all change. They deserve to be embalmed as classic.

When I looked up from my momentary reverie, Sylphy was gone; and it may be well to mention that the pink "shally" morning-dress was raised to the dignity of a visiting pelisse in her hands, and the somewhat soiled white bonnet renewed its freshness above her truly pretty copper-colored face; while the heart that beat in her foolish and innocent brown bosom was rendered radiantly happy by the possession of both.

"So Captain Wentworth admired my appearance."

Nothing pleases a woman, not over well satisfied with her looks, like an indirect tribute of this kind whose sincerity cannot be questioned. Open flattery I had long since learned to despise as valueless. The very indelicacy of its directness was, in almost all cases, a proof of its falsity and the impurity of its source; and my own ideal of beauty had ever been very different from and far above my own limited pretensions thereto.

I got up, I remember, on this occasion, first assuring myself that Bertie was sound asleep, in her little couch, lying with one arm under, and the other wreathed about her head, in her usual statuesque attitude of repose (surely no one ever slept so calmly, so like the unbreathing dead, as this emotional child); and crossing the room, candle in hand, I stared as deliberately, and dispassionately, at my own reflection in the mirror as though I had been coolly surveying a stranger, or a lay-figure.

All persons have done this once or twice at least in their lives, I believe, and with little more motive than actuated me at that moment. Yet no one would like to be observed in such a process, and it was pleasant to me to believe that my companion slumbered profoundly, while I studied with renewed interest the face I saw daily and yet scrutinized so rarely that it was to me almost like that of a stranger. I looked upon it now as I would have done on a portrait suddenly placed before me. I saw a pale, oval face framed in ripples of raven hair. Lips sad, to sternness; eyes grave, to mournfulness; delicate yet imperfect features, — no ray of beauty there that I could trace, — an air of interest, perhaps, nothing beyond. As to the mere figure, why that might pass, I knew, — strength, suppleness, sufficient height, moulded outlines, there were; some grace too, indisputably; but beauty, —that was a different matter altogether. Queen Zenobia forsooth! The man was dreaming, or the girl romancing, — the last impossible, I saw on second thoughts. (What could she know of Queen Zenobia?) Queenly indeed! Mine was a different standard of royalty; and, as to beauty, again I recalled the radiant delicacy of Evelyn Erle's appearance and the May-rose loveliness of Mabel's in contrast. Marion's face I knew was infinitely handsomer than mine, and Madge's even as fair.

A Frenchwoman once told me, in her candid characteristic way, that, being naturally plain and ambitious of admiration,

she had made herself pretty by dint of looking in the glass. The idea was, that good taste had suggested adaptation as the secret of success, and she made herself mistress of all her points good and bad, and applied them to circumstances by constant and disinterested self-examination. This was a frank exposé; and I looked upon her as a finished artiste from that time. But I, who had neither her taste nor talent for self-study, nor perseverance to contend with difficulties, could never have subjected myself to such martyrdom, even for such an end.

It had always beeu a bore to me to look into a mirror which reflected so little to admire; simply because, to make a full toilet was ever an irksome and irritating process to my impatient nature, and, for an ordinary one, very little guidance of this kind was sufficient. Yet I stood that night gazing and pondering long on every feature; and the practical conclusion I drew was, that the means might answer the end. Captain Wentworth was a man of taste and discernment, it was plain; and he thought me "queenly." Bertie was an artist born, and she had said, in her untaught, childish wisdom of insight, "If I had your looks, Miss Miriam, I would go on the stage." Her father had made the same remark from other causes. My own examination was favorable to these opinions; and, for the first time, my mind turned seriously in that direction as a means of future fortune and distinction. I had some tragic power, I knew and felt; and, "if the worst came to the worst," as Bertie had said, there was a possible career before me. Besides, might not my own endeavor be an opening to her as well? for I could not doubt that sooner or later, personal exertion or dependence would be the two alternatives placed before the daughters of Colonel Lavigne.

"I hope you have admired yourself sufficiently, Miss Monfort," said a small, mocking voice behind me. I turned to behold Bertie leaning on her elbow watching me intently, and smiling derisively. It was provoking to be so pursued; it was absolutely humiliating.

"I thought you were asleep, Bertie," I remarked coldly, "or I should not have acted as if I had been quite alone. How long have you been feigning slumber?"

"Oh! not at all; you waked me up a few minutes ago, reciting poetry, I believe. The eternal parrot, I suppose. 'I thought I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more."' I have

neither been watching nor eavesdropping. But it is funny to find out what times some people take to look in the glass and rehearse. I have been wondering ever since you came, how it was you 'primped' so little, — that is Marion's word, you know, for being *fixy*. I know all about it now. When other people are sound asleep, you jump up to recite and paint and powder. I had no idea you were such a designing young lady," laughing elfishly; "I shall tell Captain Wentworth, to-morrow, what I have discovered to-night, see if I don't," shaking her wicked head.

"Captain Wentworth!" I repeated, much more annoyed than I liked to acknowledge at the suggestive threat. One hates so very much to appear ridiculous or vain in the minds of one's superiors in age, wisdom or position; and my conduct was and must remain inexplicable, without condescending too greatly to explain. So that, although I knew that Bertie was only jesting in her saucy, bitter way, yet I felt the disrespect of her behavior and of this last allusion keenly, and resented them on the spot.

"Bertie, you are impertinent and intrusive, and you shall no longer sleep in my chamber without an apology for such conduct."

"What have I done, Miss Miriam?" she asked in amazement; sitting bolt upright in her bed, her thick hair streaming around her face, her hands clasped, her eyes aflame, a very vision of vixenish mischief.

"Done! you have been guilty of indelicacy and rudeness to me, your teacher. What is it to you, whether I look in the glass by day or night? What right have you to play the spy on every act of mine, then taunt me about what you cannot understand? I choose to be private henceforth, and relieved from your unresting vigilance, as I have a right to be by contract."

"That you can never be, notwithstanding," was the impertinent reply: "I shall watch you unceasingly while you stay at Beauseincourt. 'A cat can look upon a king,' I suppose, or even a grand tragedy queen like you. I shall stare at you just as much as I please, Miriam Monfort."

She used that name always in addressing me when piqued or determined to impress me, I observed, — that is, when we were alone together; otherwise, no provocation could have wrung it from her lips.

"You are a little goose," I rejoined, "not worth mind-

ing; and I am ashamed to have suffered you to fret me. Lie down, and go to sleep; and to-morrow, unless you express your regret for all you have said, I shall insist on a separation."

"Have it as you will, madam," she exclaimed, with an outraged air: "I offer you fire and water, as the Parthians did their neighbors before fighting them. You can choose my friendship or emnity: they are equally and eternally at your service," setting her teeth grimly.

"Thank you. I prefer peace to either," I remarked carelessly. "I will dispense with the absurd alternatives you propose."

"And peace you shall never have again at Beauseincourt, if you pursue your cold-blooded and revengeful scheme of banishment. I thought I heard a voice cry 'sleep no more' shall be a little more of a reality with you, perhaps, than it was even with that cowardly old Macbeth that you are so fond of reading about. For the voice shall be mine, combined with that of the most musical cat I can obtain for love or money in all Lesdernier."

She spoke these words with shrill rapidity.

"Bertie, this is intolerable. I have half a mind to slap you soundly. Indeed were it not for my own dignity"—

"That is just what I want you to do, tyrant, despot," she interrupted. "Now let the contest begin as soon as you like. 'Come on, Macduff,' Monfort, or whatever your true name is! It is all the same in Yankee-Dutch."

I walked up to her calmly, and caught her wrists.

"Bertie, are you crazy?" I asked, "or what does possess you?"

To my surprise she was trembling with excitement and as cold as marble.

"Child, child, what is this?" I asked. "I thought you were more than half in fun, only impertinent; I could not have believed all this was real rage as well as nonsense. What does it all mean?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing," trembling excessively; "only I like to tease you a little, sometimes. It is my way. But for you to turn upon and rend me, like an enraged tiger, and threaten me with your claws and exile from your room was something too unexpected, too dreadful. Smaller things than that have driven some of our race to suicide." And she burst into tears, sobbing convulsively for a season

"Yes," she continued, as she grew composed: "it is my way of finding people out, —to tease them is my touchstone. But you are true gold, Miriam Monfort, I do believe. I am so glad that hateful engineering man does not know your true name; he thinks Harz so ugly; I know he does, — so glad no one knows it but me, my princess in disguise."

By this time her arms were round my neck, her head on my breast, and she was in appearance calm.

"But why do you hate Captain Wentworth, Bertie?" I asked at last, impelled so to do, in despite almost of my own endeavor, — for this child's instincts seemed so clear and fine, that they exerted undue influence, perhaps, over my own judgment, and I craved her real opinion of every one.

"Because he is going to take my dearest one away from me. I see it so plainly. I saw it from the very first. Before you spoke to him even. I saw it 'as through a glass, darkly,' as you say sometimes. What does that mean, anyhow?"

"Child, child! there is nothing farther from his thoughts or wish, or from mine,"—

"There, don't speak falsely," she said, laying her small, presumptuous hand over my lips; then removing it instantly again, she smiled up in my face.

"My dear, this is mere waywardness. It is not ladylike for you to say such things to me. I should be very unwomanly to suffer myself to entertain any thoughts like this, of a mere stranger. I beg you will never repeat such folly to me or any one else, and I should be humbled to the dust, could *he* suspect that such a subject had ever been broached between us."

"Others think of themselves; I think only of others," she replied, "and of you most of all perhaps: so I see a great deal more than any one else," shaking her head solemnly; "and I have noticed his eyes gazing on you whenever you look away, and yours often fixed on him, with a different expression, though. He seems to be drawn towards you as Louey's swans are drawn after the loadstone that leads them to swim round the basin. But you look at him as if you were trying to make out where you could have seen him before, or to fathom his thoughts. Still it is all the same. 'Love begets love,' you know, and what he feels now for

you, you will soon feel for him. It is your fate, maybe. Well, he is a noble man, I suppose," with a deep-drawn sigh; "but I know this much, — when you get married, I shall be forgotten, all alone in the world again. The thought exasperates me; I will keep you single if I can."

"Bertie," I said, without farther discussion, "I am going to read my chapter in the Bible, now. Let me read it aloud, and you will sleep the better afterwards."

I read her of Ruth and Naomi, — of their constant affection, rather; narrating the rest of the story briefly, and without those details which it was best for her not to hear, and winding up with a moral relevant to our own friendship.

"You see, dear Bertie, that the marriage of Ruth made no difference in her love for Naomi, nor in Naomi's for her. So must it be with us. Whichever way the chance falls, a true and large heart has room for friendship, whatever the ties of relationship that bind it. It is only mean and narrow-minded people that concentrate all feeling in self, and husband and wife are one, you know."

"Ah! you just talk so to comfort me. But I will try not to be selfish. I do hope Captain Wentworth is a good man; but I can't tell yet,"— and she lay wrapped in deep consideration, her sweet and serious eyes now fixed on the wall, —"*I must see.*"

"Discard that idea altogether from all future conversation of ours, and even from your thoughts, if you love me, Bertie," were my last words to her that night. And, as far as I could perceive, I was obeyed, at least for a season, by this strange child.

That evening, the last but one before New Year's Eve, there was a pleasant company in the saloon of Beauseincourt. Alice Durand and Mr. Gregory had joined our circle, and added fresh aliment to its half-decaying flame, for, before they came in, an excited discussion had taken place between Colonel Lavigne and his daughters, to this effect.

"Papa, why must we always have the same people to our New Year's dinners?" Madge had asked impatiently, after reading a flaming note from Mr. Finistere, indicating his approach on the following day with his daughter.

"'Noblesse oblige,' my dear, and consistency is a jewel. How often have I told you this! Trades-people and Yankees (no offence, Miss Harz) may do things of this sort.

It is their privilege; but our condition is different. Better a thousand times be cut by a friend, than cut him. The evil recoils in such instances. You understand me, of course; I never explain. It is vulgar to be capricious. Would you leave out your Cousin Celia, for instance?"

"Oh! not for the world, papa."

"Or that butterfly, her husband?"

"Not Major Favrand, if all the rest were dropped," said Marion, firmly. "He is invaluable on such occasions."

"'For what's a butterfly at best,
But a caterpillar dressed?'"

murmured little Louey, in her peculiar style of irrelevant association, one word being enough with her to strike the mystic chain of ideas through her ear; then turning off quickly to the then popular song of "I'd be a butterfly," she hummed it in an undertone until she was sent to bed.

"Oh! but papa, are we always to revolve in the same beaten track?" exclaimed Madge. "The Lurlies, the Finisteres, the de Bonvilles. I know what each one is going to say as soon as his or her lips are parted, or even before. It is like an old song, with a refrain at the end. The 'bluebells of Scotland,' is not tamer. When are we to have something fresh?" beating a tattoo with her fingers on the table.

"I know not, my child. This is a penalty we have to pay for being permanent people, — a very slight one, I think, compared to the infinite disadvantages of upstartism, which gives, it is true, every man the liberty appertaining to insignificance"—

"Of choosing his own acquaintances," boldly interrupted Madge. "I wish I were an upstart then; or 'parvenu,' the more elegant term of the two, I believe, is it not, Miss Harz, being French?"

"Mushrooms have a very pleasant time," interpolated Bertie, quaintly, "with fairies flitting about them of moonlight nights. I wish I were a toadstool."

"I'd be a butterfly," Louey continued to hum softly.

"Your daughters are decidedly democrats, I find, Colonel Lavigne," I said, willing to interrupt or prevent a discussion that I feared might become unpleasant as well as unprofitable. "How is it with your son?" That name

was a talisman, I knew, that always stirred his truest feelings.

"Oh, he is staunch, loyal, true to his own, always!" his face lighting up as he spoke, "and here is a man who can testify to all that," extending his hand to Captain Wentworth as he entered.

"Well, they will all be new to him and Miss Harz, at least, and that is something," Bertie mused aloud as if settling a vexed question, at the same time folding her hands demurely.

"Papa, wasn't it Walter that called Mr. Finistere the hand-organ man?" asked Madge carelessly, with a twinkle in her eye, however, not to be repressed.

"I don't know, my dear; I hope not," with agitation. "Your brother would scarcely have committed such an impropriety, — such a solecism, — I think. Mr. Finistere has represented our country abroad, and deserves its consideration. The Emperor of Austria, with his own royal hand, presented to him" —

"Now we are to have the snuff-box story," whispered Bertie slyly, as meek as a mouse the next moment.

"Ahem! What are you whispering about, Robertina? Yes: with his own august hand, presented a snuff-box, Miss Harz, of chased gold surrounded with rubies, I believe" (addressing me, so as to fix my scattering attention) "or it may be diamonds, though the intrinsic value is unimportant, as a parting pledge of his friendship to Albert Finistere. You will see it, no doubt, to-morrow, Captain Wentworth," turning blandly to that gentleman, to fox his ear, detected in being also inattentive.

"Yes, no doubt," said Bertie dryly: "he always shows it, whether you ask to see it, or not. But he is stingy about his snuff, though, — vanilla poison. I always take a sly pinch just to spite him."

"Very ill-bred of you, Robertina, I must confess. Little girls of your age should decline all such invitations, made from civility alone. Besides, consider the odium of snuff-taking as affixed to a young lady."

"Miss Lurlie dips, I am sure!" persisted the perverse Bertie.

"My dear, never repeat scandal," said her mother, warmly. "It is a wretched system of bad taste."

"I heard Aunt Celia tell you so," she persevered; "and she always speaks the truth, you say."

"Bertie, you are incorrigible," I whispered. "Be warned, be silent; you seem possessed sometimes."

"But dipping is not as bad as sipping, after all. Old Mrs. Pomeroy does both; for I saw her myself, with her brandy bottle and snuff-jar together," — she added desperately, rising and nearing the door as she spoke: "and, worse than all, Miss Finistere smokes cigarettes, and swears like a trooper, — there's your society!" And, with a triumphant and certainly rather unrefined snap of her fingers, Bertie vanished. It was very wrong, — very coarse, even, and ill bears repetition; but Captain Wentworth was evidently stifling with laughter. I was convulsed with inward merriment for one moment, but grave the next. Madame Lavigne smiled in spite of her best efforts to the contrary; but Colonel Lavigne was unaffectedly angry.

"The little limb!" he said. "But what can an unaided man accomplish? We must look to you, Miss Harz," and he directed reproachful glances towards me, in his desire to throw off responsibility, — "look to you for all amelioration in Bertie; she is a hard case, I acknowledge."

"I must entreat the pedagogue's as well as pupil's privilege of a Christmas holiday, Colonel Lavigne," I replied, somewhat haughtily perhaps. "Until that time expires, I will delegate to you my authority. Suffer me, if you please, to forget the schoolroom for a season. I will do my best for Bertie when rules are enforced again."

"Oh! that is all we can expect, certainly, my dear young lady," clasping and rubbing his hands in a deprecating manner; "but it seems to me Bertie has regular relapses of perversity, — a sort of moral intermittent attack. She seemed to be improving rapidly awhile ago, under your gentle and judicious sway; but has fallen back again from grace, and will likely do better once more within a week or two. How is this Louisa?" addressing his wife carelessly, to hide his own embarrassment.

"That episode of the bear unhinged her a little, Colonel Lavigne," was the rejoinder. "She is nervous, you know, always was, — I never could reconcile her excitable and sensitive nature with so much courage as she has demonstrated occasionally. When little Jack's ankle was broken, you remember, she held his foot, while Doctor Durand set it, and

never flinched though she fainted away, and was ill afterwards. The foot was shockingly mangled, it is true, — a sight no one else could bear to see, not even his own mother."

"It is the blooded horse who swerves at his own shadow, that will walk up to the cannon's mouth. Bucephalus was but a type," remarked Captain Wentworth: "the dray horse, whose nerves on ordinary occasions seem made of iron, has, we know, no heart for warlike emergencies, — and so it is I fancy with the human race. The bravest men I have ever known have been nervous subjects, as well as the greatest orators and actors. One must have high-strung nerves in order to feel acutely; one must feel acutely in order to impress others. But, of course, in all such temperaments there is great, almost fatal reaction."

"But for relaxation so great as to form a perfect contrast to such manifestations," I added, "the tightly drawn bow-string would burst and the weapon be destroyed. Doctor Sangrado's hot water and blood-letting system of medicine is not so absurd as might appear, for certain patients."

"I am glad I am of the dray-horse order," said Madge, laughing: "I like to be strong and up to every day necessities better than great emergencies. Now Miss Harz counts Bertie a heroine because she happens to be less afraid of bears than the rest of us, and has a stouter heart for surgery."

"Genius has many phases," observed Captain Wentworth, glancing approvingly at me, while reverting to his own theory. I happened to meet his eye, and I felt my cheek glow pleasurably, then pale in the next instant.

"This will never do," I thought, repeating my soliloquy of the morning. "What is this man to me? what can he ever be? Nothing, — less than nothing. A shadow of a shade, rather;" and I shook my head defiantly.

Alas, for congeniality! It is a terrible snare even for the strong and consistent. Those pleasant hours in the library, after the breaking of the ice between us — repeated daily, for I sat there reading by Colonel Lavigne's permission, a few hours every morning while he was out on his horse, — left pleasant memories, and involuntary regrets, and were as refreshing to my intellectual nature as a desert oasis is to a camel. Nay, to carry out the camel simile, I then and there imbibed draughts that I bore away with me, and which served later to quench the intolerable thirst of arid desola-

tion, and like the scent of desert air to the creature born for its solitary wastes, was the atmosphere of that book-lined and suggestive room to my spirit.

On New Year's morning as I sat alone, Captain Wentworth approached me with the offering of a book. It was a simply bound copy of Praed's poems, then newly published, now out of print,* I believe, in which his own name was written. Not intended for me of course in the beginning, but none the less acceptable.

"Do you remember the subject of our discourse the first day on which I saw you in the library?" he asked.

"Yes, perfectly. It was the pleasures or pains of memory, I recollect."

"And you took Rogers's view, of course, as a true woman ought to do. I had not glanced over this little volume then, which I packed up among others in New York, being an admirer of Praed's rare genius. By the bye, that charade on Campbell is the most exquisite thing of the kind I have ever seen. I had met with that before; but the question is not of that now. The poem of 'Memory,' singularly enough, which I read yesterday, for the first time, embodies my own feeling exactly, — such as I described them to you. Please to read it, and give me your opinion of it, Miss Harz. Apart from the sentiment, which struck me of course at once agreeably, being coincident with my own, the verse is exquisite, as far as I am a judge. Every word is placed and selected with the care and accuracy of a lapidary arranging fine stones for a perfect necklace, and the very sound alone in many places conveys the sense. Hear this, for instance," and he read, with a sort of suppressed enthusiasm, very impressive to the mind, if monotonous to the ear, —

"Sleep where the thunders fly
Across the tossing billow,
Thy canopy the sky,
And the lonely deck thy pillow.
And dream, while the chill sea-foam
In mockery dashes o'er thee,
Of the cheerful hearth, and the quiet home,
And the kiss of her that bore thee."

"Ah! I can realize all that." His expressive voice failed, and his face saddened again as the earth does when a cloud passes over the sun.

* This narrative claims its completion in 1858.

"Is not your mother living, Captain Wentworth?" I could not forbear asking; his own face and the suggestion of the lines impelling the question irresistibly.

"No, I have not one relation that I know of, except, perhaps, a sister's child somewhere. But I have vowed never to try to find that relative again, dead to me in one way or the other, I suppose, by this time."

His gloomy brow forbade farther pursuance of the subject. After a pause, it cleared up suddenly.

"You, too, are an orphan, I believe?" he questioned, gazing at me earnestly and kindly.

"Yes; poor and an orphan, — two bitter pills together." And I smiled or tried to smile; I was warning him now, of the hopelessness of his suit, — revealing my true condition.

"Are you alone?" he asked abruptly.

"Quite alone," I repeated, after a moment's hesitation. It was certainly true as far as regarded my present position and the distance and alienation of my few friends.

"A mournful lot indeed, for one so young," he mused, shaking his head slowly. "But you are appreciated here, I think; nay, I am sure of it.

"Over-appreciated, I fear," I rejoined sadly, "which is always oppressive to just natures."

"Ah! that is as one may fancy. It is a good sign to see any person believe such a thing possible, however. Nature deals in compensations, and self-complacency is the strength of fools."

"That is why we can never forgive that fault," I said, "of all others the most harmless."

"No; it is not harmless," he remarked, emphatically; "since it induces and insures false positions, against which human justice instinctively wars and rebels. I have come to consider it a most aggressive quality; for I have been preached and prated at by a fool, until I have felt all my Cain instincts in the ascendancy. And I, who am not a bad nor violent man, as the word goes, nor yet a strictly religious one, I acknowledge, in mere matters of conventional creed, have been lamented over as a lost spirit, by a wretch incapable of conceiving even of one of my motives, merely because he arrogated to himself to be a subject of divine grace."

"This was fanataeism rather than self-complacency," I argued · "Thev are twain. Pray discriminate."

"Not always," he rejoined, briefly. "They are too often the same, identical, even."

"I have met with such people myself," I continued, "and been counselled besides, on mere material matters, by those whose experiences I had mastered so long before as to have put them, as effete and impracticable, under foot completely. Yet it was scarcely worth the trouble to contend or explain; so I suffered the tirade to prevail in somewhat derisive silence."

"Yes; you are capable of that," he observed, with the look of moral survey that gave him so indifferent an air of interest. Paradoxical phrase! that I do not expect to have understood; but yet which conveys my meaning to my own mind perfectly and conclusively, and as no other could; so let it stand.

"What a strange mixture of fire and frost you are, Miss Harz," he added after a pause, as if he had just come to a conclusion.

"And you, I fear are critical or nothing," I rejoined, laughing. "I feel, sometimes when in your society, as if I were poised in one scale of a balance, which you were holding, with some invisible thing in the other, against which you were always weighing me. Now, I protest against being treated like sugar or salt, or lead or flour, or soap or feathers, and beg to be securely placed on terra firma again."

"It shall be as you say," he answered, significantly; "yet, perhaps it would not offend you, if you knew what occupied the other scale, and how nearly your weight was the same. Have you no curiosity to know?"

"None," I replied, carelessly. "I am too faulty to stand comparisons,—besides too proud."

"When a man weighs a woman with his ideal, and does not find her wanting, she need not be offended," he said, gently, standing quietly before me with downcast eyes, and speaking in low tones of suppressed emotion.

I recall his very attitude as he spoke,—his feet placed closely together, his hands locked behind him, his head inclined gently foward, his body rigid.

"Nor very greatly flattered, perhaps," I replied. "In most instances, a man's ideal is a sorry thing, as I have seen it realized."

"And a woman's?" he questioned, looking up quickly.

"Ah! that depends on the strength, height and breadth of her imagination, you know. Mine conjures Titans, and dwarfs comparison."

He smiled in a sad, cynical way he had sometimes, — as if he saw something no one else beheld, or held the clues of infinite experience, — sighed, and shook his head gravely.

"You will throw away your ideal some day," he observed quietly, looking at me earnestly, and I thought coldly; "all women do, *must do* sooner or later. They are obliged, from the very nature of things, to be conventional. They have no choice."

"The resource of a 'masterly inactivity,' if no more, they at least possess," I rejoined proudly.

"Not masterly always," he persisted. "Men carve the statues, you know. Lions are not sculptors, and Æsop prefigured woman in his fable."

We were interrupted here — if interrupted it could be called, when, on one side at least, the conversation can (dare?) proceed no farther — by the entrance of Colonel Lavigne and General Finistere, the latter of whom had arrived in advance of his daughter.

"Sorry to interrupt your literary tête-à-tête," said the host, with his usual courteous bow and urbane wave of the hand. "You could not have a better interpreter of this quaint old library of mine, Captain Wentworth, than Miss Harz; she is a perfect bookworm, as well as a very learned lady." (As who should say, a learned pig or goat.) "My children have improved wonderfully under her care and tuition," addressing General Finistere, a tall, gaunt man of sixty, who tapped his inevitable snuff-box, and bowed solemnly all round by way of an owlish acknowledgment to this remark, glancing approvingly at me athwart gray whiskers.

The quiver of mirth convulsed my features for one moment, as I approached the door.

"What! going to leave us, Miss Harz? Do not let us disturb your useful studies, I beg. She finds this library a great resource, General Finistere, even as an aid to her future career as a teacher and consequent hope of livelihood."

"A most estimable young person, truly," said that worthy, cramming an elephantine pinch of snuff into his narrow nostrils, from which long, gray hairs protruded grimly; then, as if performing a Japanese rite of ceremony,

extending the box silently to his host, who bowed over the solemn ceremonial and partook.

"A pair of intolerable old ganders," muttered Captain Wentworth, between his set teeth, as he opened the door to suffer me to pass out: "your patience is extraordinary."

"Substitute indifference, and you have the idea; I cannot lay claim to so godlike a quality as patience. Thank you," as he gave me my book, "and good-morning." And I went away, Praed in hand. Ah, little book! I found you a great consolation.

On my way to my chamber I was arrested by Bertie, who drew me out mysteriously on one of the little stone balconies jutting forth from the state dining-room, where I stood, an amused spectator of two early arrivals of Madame Lavigne's more distant and distinguished guests, — those who were to remain for a week of festival at Beauseincourt. First, drove up in her antiquated coach, Miss Finistere, the daughter of the worthy gentleman I had just parted with in the library, and who had preceded her in his sulky, instead of taking a seat in the high-swung toppling chariot, green externally, lined with red morocco, and which Bertie compared to Cinderella's equipage, horses, coachman, color and all. This vehicle having speedily delivered itself of its precious load, including a spruce mulatto waiting-maid and many boxes, made way for the more stylish equipage of Miss Lurlie, a chocolate-colored barouche with grays, which came round the circle in very ambitious style, and which, on pausing, was found to contain three persons, — a gentleman and two ladies; the stylish and inevitable mulatto maid this time being on the box with the sable coachman, this last in livery.

From this carriage descended to the broad granite steps below, first, a gentleman, young, fashionable and foreign-looking; next the ponderous Mrs. Pomeroy, Miss Lurlie's aunt and propriety (not life) preserver; thirdly, and not without much noise of chatter and laughter and settling of garments and consigning of packages and shawls and fluttering of flounces and feathers, Miss Lurlie herself, the celebrated belle and beauty of that region.

"I wonder what the man is this time," said Bertie, thoughtfully; the last was a Swede, and of all outlandish gibberish, his was the strangest; the one before, a Spaniard, Juarez, who fought the duello"—

"About her Bertie?" I asked.

"No; not about her at all, — *Politics;*" she replied, sententiously. "But I will not tell you about that; it might prejudice you, and I don't wish to do anything so mean. Just look at the poor man, how she keeps him waiting until she embraces mother and the girls. Thank Heaven, I am not there to be boa-constrictored by those long, thin arms. I am determined she shan't rumple my new lace collar. I am taking pattern you see."

"Oh, Bertie, your mother's friend!"

"Not my mother's friend at all; nor anybody's, — not even her own, — a shallow fool."

"You are too young to be so censorious, my dear," I remarked: "come away."

"Not until she goes in. I want to observe that man; I want you to observe him. It is so funny!"

Later, I did so, and was introduced to him by Madame Lavigne, as the Count D'Agnaud, an attaché of the corps diplomatique, — an inane and affable nobleman, worthy of his misspelled name, — totally harmless. He had small half-closed eyes, a sickly smile, a chapeau bras, which he held, standing, beneath his arm, sitting, between his knees; while his long, lank hands, adorned with heraldic jewels, and pointed finger-nails, pensively dangled above it, evidently for display. He possessed, besides a large, unmeaning forehead; a small, unmeaning nose; a peaked and retreating chin, on which grew a scant imperial of tufted black hair; sunken cheeks; and an interesting, sentimental air, wholly irresistible in his own estimation at least. Other guests were arriving by this time, and I turned away somewhat ashamed of my occupation; besides, the table, which I went in to look at, now demanded a part of my attention. I helped to adorn it with flowers arranged on the great, central plateau; the board being already arrayed with fine glass, superb napiery, china and plate, for the important occasion. Aunt Felicité and Jura were in their element in the midst of these solemn preparations. No palace chamberlains were ever more impressed with the responsible nature of their avocation. Jura wore an antique silver watch, which he drew out from time to time, so as to keep ahead of, or at least pace with, the universal enemy; and the bunch of keys at the side of Aunt Felicité was in a state of constant jingling expectation and momentary requisition.

Their mistress was to be saved all trouble on this occasion. That was the one point of union and resolution between them; for usually no dog of the cur species or feline femininity ever disagreed more snarlingly and continually than did these two ancient servitors. Madame Lavigne's condition rendered her unusually sacred in the eyes of her whole household at this time; and the expectation of an additional prince, in Queen Victoria's palace, could not have occasioned greater interest, conjecture, or rejoicing among her dependants.

When all that I could efficiently do was done and Marion and Madge had withdrawn to their chambers to make a dinner toilet, I, for the same purpose repaired to mine. Bertie was already dressed in her simple, speedy way, and had gone down to the parlor; and I found Sylphy impatiently waiting my entrance, comb and brush in hand.

"What you gwine to w'ar to-day, Miss Mirime? Not dat brown silk dress again, I does hope and pray."

"What then, Sylphy? Is not my 'bronzè' gros de Naples, good enough? and how do you know I have anything better?" I asked, surveying her keenly.

She colored visibly through her rich brown skin, and said,—

"Dat day you sent me to get the pink shally dress wat you give me, I felt interested to turn up a few ob dem odder articles, for fear ob mustiness; and I seed some mighty fine clothes, I tells you. Dey's all dar, jes' as I found 'em, Miss Mirime, in de trunk, 'deed dey is. I only wanted to look at 'em like, for dere own good. Don't be oneasy, nor out ob sorts, Mistus."

"Such curiosity is very impertinent, Sylphy; but I do not suspect you of more. Take the key, then, as you know the way already and bring me the dress at the very bottom of the trunk, — that folded in linen."

She returned with a dark maroon, velvet walking dress, fastened to the throat with buttons of gold and garnet, simply made, but of a peerless material, both for color and quality.

I had determined, before she spoke, to put this on, with a collar of fine lace, and rose-colored bow at the throat. Jewels were not for the governess of Beauseincourt; though stones of price lay concealed in a secret drawer of my writing-desk. But for once, and in the sight of all these caste-

proud Southerners, Colonel Lavigne and the rest, I would appear arrayed in garments such as my birth and breeding entitled me to wear, regardless of present consistency, in honor of the past, and heedless of remark. Was there another lurking and unacknowledged motive? Did I indeed want to look my best that day (and I knew full well the rare becomingness of that simple yet splendid dress), as I had not cared to do before the advent of one Christmas guest, — he who had secretly commended me? I leave the solution to the sagacity and charity, both, of my reader, who, if young and a woman, will not deem my motives either unnatural or inexcusable, who, if old and crusty or hypercritical, is welcome to his or her constructions and opinions.

When I entered the drawing-room, before dinner, I found quite an imposing circle drawn at a deferential distance around the brilliant, crackling fires, so suggestive of the season, although through the open casement of the Southern windows came the balmy breath of Spring laden with the perfume of flowers and the song of birds.

Doctor and Mrs. Durand, with two of their daughters; Mr. and Mrs. de Bonville, a cheerful, cosey, middle-aged couple; Major and Madame Favrand; and a few young gentlemen, undoubtedly indigenous to the soil, had been added to the company since the day before.

Madame Favrand had made an unusual effort to join the party, which she considered it almost a family duty to do on New Year's Day, as had been the custom of all of the relatives from the beginning of the Lavigne settlement. The French idea of the importance of the "Jour de L' an," celebration still prevailed among them; and this had always, by common consent, been held at "Beauseincourt," the master of which, had — from the fact, probably, of its having been the nucleus of the name in that region — been ever acknowledged the head of the line, from first to last, by acclamation.

The seal of approaching death was, however, unmistakably placed on the face of this sad and, to me, beautiful and inexpressibly interesting woman.

CHAPTER XI.

AN oval table of great width (the central portion of which was completely filled by a plateau of glass and silver, illumined and ornamented with wax lights in rich candelabra and the rarest flowers from the conservatory of Bellevue) was surrounded by some twenty guests at six o'clock on New Year's evening. The rich array of china, glass, and silver that covered the board presented a singular mixture of ancient and modern styles and devices; one portion having been the heritage of Colonel Lavigne, the other the gift of Mr. Benôit, the once affluent merchant, to his daughter on the occasion of her marriage.

Side tables neatly spread in the recesses of the apartment, were in readiness for such guests or members of the family as could not find seats at the principal table, or who might happen in accidentally at the eleventh hour. This is an established Southern custom at which no one takes umbrage.

At one of these Madge presided, with a party of young friends; at the other Louey and Laura held festival with the children of Mr. and Mrs. de Bonville. To complete the hospitable arrangements, a long, narrow marble slab, running along one side of the apartment, was arrayed with wines, breads, sauces, jellies and piles of plates and silver, in readiness for the well-trained waiters.

The meats were placed and carved on the table in ancient style. The vegetables alone were handed; and each course consisted of an equal number of dishes, differently prepared, so that the table was entirely cleared between boiled and stewed, and roast and broiled; between the reign of plum pudding, mince-pies, jellies, tarts and custards, and the more ethereal presence of fruits, candies and fancy cakes, with the crowning ornament of the Calhoun Castle, placed conspicuously in the centre.

Such was the style of the stereotyped Southern dinners

of those plenteous days, before the Russian mode prevailed, so conducive to conversation and the "dolce far niente," which last, we are told, is in turn so favorable to digestion. "The specimen scrap style," it may be called in many cases, which economists find congenial and hotel-keepers convenient, but at which beggars and servants no doubt repine.

Carving was no sinecure in those days, and the post of honor was not always the seat of comfort; for it was then considered quite complimentary to ask a guest to dissect a fowl, or carve a roast, — a sort of tribute to his skill in this very gentlemanlike accomplishment.

I remember that Doctor Durand and Mr. de Bonville were both pressed into the service on this occasion; Major Favrand graciously and magnanimously declining the honor vouchsafed him, as a relative, in favor of Mr. Maginnis (a stranger in the gates, who sat on my left, while the kinsman himself occupied the seat at my right hand), on the plea that it would consume every moment of his unoccupied time to attend properly to the wants of the lady he had escorted to the table, which pointed remark, of course, drew all eyes rather merrily in the direction of my plate. Mr. Maginnis had by some irrelevance in the numbers of the guests, as to the difference of sex and his own skilful avoidance of incumbrance, perhaps, managed to straggle in alone; and, being fond of the pleasures of the table, had no doubt secretly felicitated himself on his independent condition and exemption from family duties, when he found himself, publicly and without his own consent, elevated to the honorable distinction of "Dissector of Ducks," by Major Favrand's cool and supercilious announcement.

His face clouded unmistakably, at his summary instalment into a post of honor that he had not tact enough to know how to decline, and which he certainly found no sinecure. The annoyance must have been increased by the impertinent declaration of his persecutor, which I have reason to think reached his ears, that by this act of oppression, he (Major Favrand), had been the means of saving him from a stroke of apoplexy, and therefore had conferred upon him the very greatest favor that one man could have accorded to another; though in his benighted gourmandise, Maginnis was ungrateful enough not to recognize the disinterested benevolence that guided this act of self-sacrifice.

"For every one knows," pursued the Major, "how devoted I am to dispensing gratifications, and how little I care about eating; so that my motive is plain. I have this consolation of virtue, at all events."

Captain Wentworth, as an entire stranger, was apprised that Madame Lavigne would accept his escort to the table; and Colonel Lavigne, as had been his custom for years on such occasions, gave his arm to Madame Favrand. The rest were paired off or divided as suited themselves, or as accident would have it. Doctor Durand and Miss Finistere, I remember, sailed in together, — the lady in a purple brocade, with a bird-of-paradise feather perched on the very summit of her massive head. Large, stolid-looking, middle-aged and common-place, in spite of her long residence abroad at one of the first courts of Europe — which exile of twenty years had no doubt consigned her to celibacy. Madame de Bonville, a sparkling little brunette, short, plump, and snub-nosed, but with bright eyes, white teeth and far from ugly, hung, basket-fashion on the arm of long, lank, Mr. Finistere, an old gentleman of a bird-like visage and self-conscious deportment — very aristocratic, and patronizing, and possessing only tho "one fault" of Tallyrand's female friend, (that of being insufferable.)

Messrs. Vernon and Gregory, two young men of very opposite characteristics of manner and appearance, with one of whom we are already slightly acquainted — both gentlemanly and intelligent, however, were in charge of Marion and Miss Alice Durand, pleasant and pretty girls, certainly, in the same style of sweet monotony. Mr. de Bonville a spruce little man who looked like a jay-bird, crest and all, divided his attentions between his plate and Mrs. Pomeroy, who required, as he said, only to be fed, wined and watered. And Miss Lurlie, all flutter and fermentation, was under the especial charge of her pensive "Brebis" as Major Favrand insisted on miscalling the Count D'Agnaud, giving as his excuse, that the meaning of a name was all one need care for, and that foreign synonymes were puzzling to the brain.

Miss Lurlie and her Count of the Louis Philippe school, (St Germain's had never had much to do with his blood and breeding evidently,) sat opposite to me and occupied much of my time in spite of the very amusing efforts made by Major Favrand for my entertainment.

My fair vis-a-vis was a Southern blonde — a very different affair from her white and red, gold and azure sisters of the North, yet exceeding these in piquancy and variety of expression, as far as she fell behind them in mere brilliancy of coloring. Her sallowness was relieved by a judicious application of the very best Paris rouge. Her long, light ringlets were frizzed into a semblance of vitality, and she managed to keep these in motion almost as incessant as that of a humming-bird, when poised above a flower. She had small, correct features, white teeth and a bewitching languishing smile; greenish gray eyes, of singular shape and opaline variety of hue and expression; a slender, oval face; a long, lithe throat; an oustretched, meagre neck, lustrous with pearl powder and pitiably bare; a shrill and wiry voice; small, thin hands with hooked and pointed fingers, the nails being worn "à la chinoise," and resembling those of one of the lesser birds of prey; skeleton arms and, as well as could be seen, an irreproachable fignre.

Her dress was of blue satin, relieved by white blonde, exquisitely made and fitting to a fault, it seemed to me, though Major Favrand impertinently declared he had seen the same dress standing up alone in her dressing-room as he passed an hour before dinner, with nothing but the head wanting to represent Miss Lurlie. But her chief attraction, perhaps, still remains untold. Upon her neck, her arms, her brow (this last ornament in the shape of a tiara), she wore diamonds of unusual size and water — representations of her fortune and rank, which never failed to assert both, in the eyes of the many-headed monster she sought to please. She was about twenty-five years of age, but already faded; yet in spite of this and many other drawbacks, she was indisputably a beauty of no common order and entitled to a lofty place as a successful coquette.

She made the very common mistake of those who speak a foreign language indifferently, when thrown with foreigners conversant with their own, and insisted on speaking "French," to the Comte D'Agnaud who perversely replied in English, his effort at the vernacular being the more successful of the two.

"Why will she try to be incomprehensible?" said Major Favrand, gravely: "he understands her English, her French is a mystery to the poor man. See how puzzled he looks every now and then, and how fiercely she gesticulates by

way of explanation. I pity them both inexpressibly. They are at cross-questions, evidently."

At last Miss Lurlie made an idiomatic error, so absurd and sudden that I could not forbear smiling as it reached my ear, and looking up I saw the eyes of the Count fastened on my face, with the eager, wistful expression of a hungry child.

"You speak Franche, Mademoiselle?" he asked impulsively, across the table, leaning forward as he spoke.

I bowed in confirmation of the accusation, adding, —

"With an English accent, however, I fear."

"Ah, no! I am sure you speak my language perfectly. It is such refreshment to me to know that any one near me can do this. I am afraid I am cause of much trouble to Miss Lurley, who is indefatigable to speak with me in my own tongue. You will assist her, Mademoiselle, I know; you have such benevolent smile! After dinner-time we will try for a conversation."

"Yes; I have no doubt Miss Harz is a finished French scholar," said Miss Lurlie, snappishly; "she had a motive in studying languages which, unfortunately, I never had." drawing herself up arrogantly. "Do you speak Italian also, Miss Harz? German?" with half-closed eyes and a condescending air; "Spanish — Portugese?"

"No, I read the first with pleasure to myself. Of the last I know nothing, not even the German character."

"Yet yours is a German-Jew name it seems to me!" superciliously.

"And yours a maritime one, 'very ancient and fish-like,'" I rejoined, carelessly laughing as I spoke. "Undine has cousins of your name probably."

"You amaze me! I thought mine a very aristocratic name, not commercial at all. And who was Undine? To what do you allude? Pray satisfy my impatience."

"The Lurlie of German story is a sort of mermaid or syren I believe. You know this of course, however, conversant as you are with literature."

"Pardon me, if I am still incredulous!" with a haughty, but embarrassed bow that stirred my blood.

"I refer you to legendary lore for all further information," I rejoined, "and to Shakespeare for my quotation. I do not stake my veracity on this matter at all. It is open to investigation. 'Where ignorance is bliss,' you know! I

need not finish the quotation, of course; it is trite and hackneyed, if apt."

Turning to Major Favrand a moment later, I saw from the merry twinkle of his eye, that he had heard and enjoyed our pass-at-arms — he alone I believe. Mr. Maginnis was far too much absorbed in his plate to be drawn aside by trifles; and others too much occupied with one another. But here comes a revelation, I am almost ashamed to make, of the very feminine, yet wholly inexcusable revenge, I wreaked this time on my mermaidish adversary. I, for a season, deliberately deprived her of her own, legitimate, imported beau! Not that I inspired him with a violent passion, or wished to do so; I simply interested and amused him, which she did not, and the grateful creature clung to me spasmodically. He was intensely egotistical, as was Miss Lurlie herself, so it may be imagined how dreary were their "entretiens!" In me he found a listener capable of understanding his French tirades (chiefly composed of quotations from Fugene Sue, which he was always obliged to render into English for her benefit and comprehension) and able to reply in his own language, whenever such reciprocity was deemed necessary or advisable. Without an effort I held the Comte D'Agnaud in chains for three days of extreme ennui to myself and mortal anguish to the deserted Lurlie, who tried in vain to call Captain Wentworth to her rescue, and failing him, one of the aids, or even the despised "indigenous." Neither of these gentlemen chose to serve as make-shifts for her coquettish needs, however, or to wear her chameleon colors, so that the poor Lurlie needed only a harp to personate her forsaken prototype.

None enjoyed my victory like Major Favrand — whose aversion to Miss Lurlie was extreme and unaccountable. But I grew heartily ashamed of the whole proceeding, when I caught by mere accident one evening the eyes of Captain Wentworth fixed upon me in grave and sorrowful surprise and even displeasure. From that moment the zest of the drama was over. I saw my conduct in its true light and loosed the chains of the pet Gallic lambkin on the spot. He accused me of caprice, I understood, but the end of it was, before many hours, he gambolled back to his injured Lurlie, penitent and disappointed, yet forgiven; and the little interlude was at an end.

And now let us "return to our Moutons" paradoxically

enough in this case — by leaving one of them with whom we have wandered too far already from the scene of action and pleasant pasture ground. A well-spread dinner-table, surrounded by a variety of guests, young and old, grave and gay; rather quiet just now, for every one is startled, when fitting his eye-glass to his nose, so as to ascertain her exact position with regard to his own, quite a remote one, and thrusting his head forward like a wild goose before a storm, Mr. Finistere, the ex-minister of Austria addresses his daughter loudly by name,—

"Adelgitha, my dear, can you tell me the exact day on which his Majesty presented me with my snuff-box? Mrs. de Bonville is desirous to know, and the date escapes my memory."

"You will find it engraved on the inside of your snuff-box lid, papa," in clear, sonorous accents; "but it is of no consequence at all, it seems to me," dryly.

"Oh! permit me to differ with you, my dear Miss Finistere," expostulated Mrs. de Bonville, looking archly around the decanters at the distant and dignified Adelgitha, with whom she was placed in line, and clasping her small, plump hands with real or affected enthusiasm; "it is of the greatest consequence to Mr. Finistere's friends to know all that concerns so very gratifying an incident, which is reflected, of course, on his countrymen and even women, I flatter myself. Am I not right, Colonel Lavigne?"

The low response escaped my ear. But a sudden and instantly recognized, though smothered, peal of laughter, smote upon it, that made my blood tingle to my fingers' ends. It was Bertie, at the side-table, who had been lying in ambush for her occasion. It had come; and for this delinquent I was responsible.

"What will she do next?" I thought with terror. But Madge had the good feeling or tact to cover up her rudeness with some well-timed remark or allusion to the extremely humorous sallies of young Mr. Duganne, one of the fortunate "indigenous," who shared the freedom and fun of the side-table, as well as the dainties of the central board, and was an object of envy to Captain Wentworth's aides, laboring for the nonce, under no slight constraint.

Marion and Miss Durand were pinks of propriety, certainly, and full of maidenly sweetness; but they had by no means the power of putting people at their ease by mak-

ing them forget their own identity, that belonged to Madge by nature, or the variety of mood that made Bertie irresistibly interesting in spite of her many imperfections.

The conversation of that dinner-table, like most such, would be little worth recording. Some snatches thereof, that reached my ear either at the moment or by subsequent report, may give an idea of its general purport, or the "conglomerated whole," as Major Favrand said, when gazing with an air of ineffable disgust, not unmixed with curiosity and pity, into the plate of Mr. Maginnis.

It is chiefly from pencillings of his own, which I am, however, by no means willing to endorse, that the table-talk of "Lesdernier," is preserved for posterity. He called it "Gossypiana,"* in compliment, as he averred, not only to the chief staple of that region but the tone of the conversation, and begged that I would insert it in my diary as a memorial of Beauseincourt. Written in his own clear, yet cramped chirography, I find it there, and venture to add it to my more truthful report, giving it for what it is worth, and as such let it pass, scribbled off as it was, in a moment of impulsive merriment.

Specimens of Table-talk, from the Note-book of a Nullifier.

SCENE FIRST.

MISS LURLIE AND COUNT D'AGNAUD

Miss Lurlie (rolling her eyes like the automaton chess-player when about to make a move). — "Robert Le Diable! Oh, the most angelic thing! vous avez raisong mong chair compte! The ghost scene in the church-yard impresses me as the most picturesque affair I ever beheld. Then the dancing of the dead nuns — truly exquisite — and such an unexpected stroke of genius: 'si natural! tout a fait enchantant n'est ce pas?'"

M. Le Comte. — "Ah, oui ma chere Demoiselle; but I prefer so much the 'Frere Diavola!' It stirrs my martial blood. 'Sang de Charlemagne!' Den ze 'Gentle Zittella,'" murmuring low, and plucking at an imaginary guitar in the air, "vat incomparable sweetness — legeretè! Don't you zink?"

* The cotton plant is Gossypium, botanically.

Miss Lurlie.—"La Dame Blanche." Que e'est tendre — que e'est jolie! cet air surtout," murmuring low, with a voice like a bird organ; "La Dame Blanche. La Dame Blanche vous attend!" at the same time casting an irresistible glance at her "Brebis."

M. Le Comte.—"Ah, Mademoiselle, you have de finest taste, sans doute, I have yet made encounter vis in America; both in art and de magical effect of de toilette! Que vous êtes ravissante ce soir — Quelle toilette incomparable. What splendor!" with an air of studied tenderness.

Miss Lurlie.—"Ah! mes diamans sans doute," casting down her large gooseberry eyes coquettishly, then glancing at him out of their corners, archly.

M. Le Comte.—"Non, Mademoiselle; c'est l'etincelle des beaux yeux!" (aside) "de votre cassette."

Major Favrand, across the way, innocently whistles low, the popular air of "All in my eye, Betty Martin," adding (after glancing at his neighbor's plate, a duty he never loses sight of for one moment)—"Don't you take rice with your Gumbo, Miss Harz? All the orthodox do" (helping her as he adds,) "the rice crop is a failure this year. Glad of it for my part. Poor negroes will rest. Besides that, tired of playing Chinese merchant, for the sake of a little filthy dross."

Miss Harz.—"'Cast your bread upon the waters,' was said àpropos of rice, so Missionary Judson tells us in his interesting memoirs, and your remark, Major Favrand, is an elucidation of the idea. You will reap gratitude, no doubt, a better harvest than rice, if not so merchantable."

Major Favrand.—"Gratitude! I have heard of that plant before, Miss Harz, but have never met with it. Is it edible? If so, please to instruct me how to prepare it, as you say it is better than rice, which I consider a very good sort of background in the way of food."

Miss Harz—"I see you are determined to wear your cap and bells to-day. Well, jingle away, so that you do it merrily and 'con amore;' I am devoted to foolishness — the real Simon Pure I mean, not your deadly, lively folly like"—

Major Favrand, (interrupting her).—"Old Finistere's! Why don't that man's guardian angel take better care of him and keep him from absurdities? Or perhaps he is tired out, as somebody says. Who was it Miss Harz?"

Miss Harz (pragmatically). — "Charles Lamb I believe. I am astonished at your desultory style of quotation Major Favrand. You never get anything straight or perfect."

Major Favrand.— "'Speak of the devil!' you know — Hearken! old Finistere is at it again. 'Still harping on my' snuff-box, as Shakespeare says. There! I got it right this time, Miss Harz. I shall get the gold medal at your examination yet. But we are losing oracles. Attention, pray!"

General Finistere. — "I cannot be certain as to the very hour, Mrs. de Bonville, but I presume I am right in alleging that it was between the hours of eleven and twelve on that never-to-be-forgotten day. It was raining too, I distinctly remember, for my coachman handed me his umbrella as I descended slowly from my carriage at the Imperial Port cochere."

Madame de Bonville (with enthusiasm).— "How ominous that must have seemed to you! Raining? But I hope you reached his Imperial Majesty's presence dry?"

General Finistere (literally). — "Yes, very dry my dear madame. But the best of good liquors were always standing on the beaufet in the ante-chamber, and I refreshed myself I assure you, before entering the imperial presence."

Madame de Bonville (nothing staggered by this literalism).—"How your loyal heart must have beat as you approached the Imperial Ruler, seated aloft on his throne like Solomon! What robes had he on? Do describe them, General Finistere. I declare the very idea of royalty agitates me strangely. I am so anti-democratic! Did he wear his crown?" fanning herself violently.

General Finistere. — "No my dear madame, only his toupee and dressing-gown of pink brocade. You ladies have such strange, exalted ideas of royalty. The Emperor was not so widely different from any other man as you might suppose. He was not unlike," hesitating for a moment for a comparison, then suddenly finding one, "my friend Colonel Lavigne here."

Madame de Bonville (eyeing Colonel Lavigne with strange reverence). — "Indeed!" She inclines her head before him profoundly.

Colonel Lavigne (interested suddenly). — "Describe the interview my dear General, I always hear you relate it with fresh interest — though for the nine hundred and ninety-ninth time! It was truly thrilling!"

Change of Scene.

Miss Marion Lavigne. — "Olives indeed! No, I can't endure them, nor "Fox-grass" pies — nor "patty Perigogs" either, as our maid Sylphy calls those foreign dainties!"

Mr. Gregory (declaiming loftily, from association of ideas as he helps himself to olives),—

"On Calpe's olive covered steeps
On India's citron covered Isles.'

Miss Durand (timidly, aside). — "How grand! he must be an actor or poet in disguise. T. H. Bailey, himself, perhaps, or who knows N. P. Willis in disguise, possibly."

Miss Lavigne. — "To return to our subject, Mr. Gregory. Can it be true, that the poor geese who furnish the material for these uneatable pâtès are really subjected to the torture of slow fires for such a purpose? It seems almost incredible to me; such inhumanity!"

Mr. Gregory (sentimentally). — "Alas! too true, I fear, compassionate lady, but it must be confessed these are not the only geese" (laying his hand on his breast with a tender air) "who are subjected to such an ordeal. The torture is by no means confined to the feathered tribes, I assure you;" with a significant and reproachful glance and deferential bend of the head scarcely to be mistaken.

Miss Lavigne (whispering to Miss Durand). — "What *can* he mean? Do enlighten me, Alice, if possible. I cannot understand his allusions I confess. He deals in mysteries."

Miss Durand. — "Nor I; something classical no doubt. He seems a very well informed and compassionate man, for a Yankee. Let us change the subject."

Madame Favrand. — "Yes, Cousin Prosper, we are tired of everything. 'Toujours perdrix,' you know. We live chiefly on bread-fruit, and fresh tamarinds just now. Our Mangosteens are not ripe yet—I am not fastidious, however, — I eat an ortolan or a gold fish occasionally!"

Colonel Lavigne (sympathizingly). — "Flying fish are better. I will send you some when I next go out — bear-hunting." He is a little absent to-day evidently! and the conversation terminates abruptly in consequence.

Doctor Durand (enthusiastically). — "I assure you my dear Miss Finistere, he bore the operation bravely — never

winced once — though I took off a toe at a time before amputating the whole foot, just to try his nerve. I shall always believe hereafter in his boasted Indian lineage. The experiment was satisfactory."

Miss Finistere—"I always thought he had the 'air noble.' The blood of 'Wotchy Tochee,' is our best aristocracy. And in spite of his habits, I shall claim him as a kinsman, from this time forth, as our friend Colonel Lavigne remarks with great originality, 'noblesse oblige' — I have avoided him hitherto, I confess."

Doctor Durand. — "I forgot to say he died under the amputation. A martyr to the noble cause of science."

Miss Finistere. — "Ah! that changes matters! You see what my intention was, nevertheless. I shall make it my affair to set it forth in his epitaph. A great relief however, his death, temporally speaking. Cross-bones and tomahawks! Don't you think that will be best as his tomb-stone crest?"

Doctor Durand (with his mouth full). — "These terrapins are delicious; try some. Yes, yes, cross-bones and tomahawks, by all means, and scalps too if you like. He deserves as far as lineage goes, almost any token of consideration. By the by, it is funny how these egg-plants ever get back in their skins again, — so much better than they went out of them!"

Miss Finistere (loftily). — "I will send you the receipt as soon as I go home. It is almost the same as that for stuffed crabs. You seem to understand that proceeding, however. (It is a pity some men's brains can't undergo the same process, without injury to life.) (Aside.) People of one idea, I detest."

Madame Lavigne (plaintively to Captain Wentworth, who seems so far to be a mere looker on in Vienna). — "I have succeeded at last in getting a soufflêt dish of silver, and teaching my cook, Candice how to make them. I hope the Count will find this well prepared. I believe no Frenchman of high rank ever dines without soufflêts. By the bye, what 'gaietè de coeur' all foreigners seem to have." (A novel and striking remark this, it must be confessed!)

Captain Wentworth. — "And 'gaietès d'estomac' — as well! I have often marvelled at the powers of assimilation displayed by the French noblesse. One third of the food, that goes to bone and skin, apparently in their case, would cause a Republican to explode into a hundred bloody frag-

ments! The fact is, my dear madame" in a confidential whisper, "Dyspepsia is the skeleton in our American closet. It grins at us from every crevice, it sits with us at every feast, like the far-famed mummy of Egypt. I think I see it now," tragically raising his hand and pointing forward.

Madame Lavigne (starting, with a little shriek). "Where, Captain Wentworth?"

Answer not intelligible, nor important if it were. Wentworth falls back in reverie.

Mrs. Durand (in answer to Mr. Maginnis, his remark being unfortunately lost to fame).—"Excellent certainly! But I prefer Gopher gumbo decidedly. It won't do to say so, however, to ears polite."

Mr. Maginnis (gruffly).—"No, what would Mrs. Grundy say?"

Mrs. Durand.—"Mrs. Grundy! I am not acquainted with the lady you allude to. Pray, where does she reside?"

Mr. Maginnis (chuckling).—"Oh! pretty much everywhere."

Mrs. Pomeroy (arousing herself suddenly, like the Prophetess in Gray's descent of Odin, and unclosing her lips to speak).—"Mrs. Grundy, did you say? Oh, we knew her very well abroad, Lily and I. She lives in Nashville, Tennessee, and her husband is a Congressman, or store-keeper, I don't know which."

Mr. Maginnis (grunting).—"Both, perhaps madame—both—the thing is not impossible at all, in a land like this. But we refer to different persons." Indulging here in an unaccountable guffaw. After which he lapses into silence and his plate again, and reverses the operation of stuffing ducks.

Mr. de Bonville (shrilly across the table to Major Favrand, who starts, as if a pistol had been fired in his ear).—"Yes, sir! we make five bales to the acre this year, and even that is an unusual yield for the uplands. Well! calculate that at seven cents a pound and you have the results of our labors, hauling over bad roads included. You rice planters fare far better, even if you lose a crop occasionally. Besides that, bagging was never so high, and as to rope, a man would have to hesitate on the score of expense, before venturing to hang himself!" smiling jauntily at this satirical stroke of sudden manufacture.

Mr. Maginnis (taking up the thread of discourse, not thrown to him at all).—"But we cotton brokers are the

losers after all; I assure you no class of men was ever more disinterestedly benevolent and devoted to the planting interest, than the much abused one I myself belong to. The self-sacrifice of the commission merchant is something borderiug on the sublime. But you know this of course, gentlemen;" falling to work again.

Major Favrand hums low, the popular air of "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," as a pleasing exemplification of the idea propounded by the liberal Scotch merchant.

Colonel Lavigne (from the foot of the table to his spouse at the head).—"Louisa, my dear, is this Burgundy of the brand of the 'Blood of the Huguenots,' or the 'Tears of the French exile?' or rather from which side of the cellar was it procured? I ask for information, wishing to be accurate. There is a wager pending on the subject between Finistere and myself, to be honest with you."

Madame Lavigne (anxiously)—"I am not sure which. Jura can tell you probably, as he is our butler. I never descend into particulars, or the cellar."

Colonel Lavigne (majestically).—"Come hither, Jura. From which side of the cellar did you procure this Burgundy? That decides the question."

Jura (bowing reverentially).—"From de Norf side, Masta; dat's de New York side. Dis de las' red currant wine; de gooseberry on de oder side, long wid de New Burgh champagne."

Colonel Lavigne (freezingly).—"That will do, Jura. Just as I supposed; you know nothing about the matter. I ought to give such things personal attention. The wager is yours General Finistere. This is the 'Exile's Tears,' though I thought at first, the 'Blood of the Huguenots;' the first wines, gentlemen, made in Burgundy after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantz."

A low groan, confirmatory of the truth of these remarks, is heard from Bertie at the side table. Major Favrand is suddenly seized with a violent fit of coughing, and Miss Harz pats him on the back compassionately until relieved; after this general confusion for a time prevails.

Colonel Lavigne (loftily).—"Bring in the punch-bowl, King, and don't fall into Jura's errors on the subject of the ingredients for punch. When you have recovered from your distressing paroxysm, Major Favrand, be good enough to instruct my servant as to the materials requisite for your

famous 'Ponche Bruliè,' which you proposed to compound for the benefit of my guests on this occasion. Should your experience fail, our friend, Le Comte D'Agnaud, will no doubt be good enough to assist your memory."

Major Favrand, frightened to death at this indirect reprimand, immediately issues his orders in the most clear and rapid manner to King, M. Le Comte, nodding approval at every item—"Bring me the punch-bowl, King. The Green Seal Champagne, Absinthe, Schneider Schnapps, Cognac brandy, Noyau and Curacoa cordials, decoction of green tea, essence of bitter almonds, sugar and lemons; don't forget one article or the punch will be a failure."

"Yet Monseuir le Majeur Favrand have forget vun, of vich I beg leave most humbly to recommend a leetle drop," says the Count D'Agnaud, rubbing his fishy looking hands together.

Major Favrand (benignly).—"Suggest it if you please, Monsieur Le Comte; it is never too late to learn."

"Watair! von leetle vine-glass-full, dat is vat de recipe calls for, if I mistake not."

The company, at this witticism, falls off into convulsions of merriment, during which, Major Favrand sneaks under the table, and Miss Harz is obliged, in default, to prepare the punch from memory; the Count kindling it, as he has frequently done rivers before, with the fire of his own brilliant imagination.

These specimens of Major Favrand's local wit and vigilance must suffice, — and no doubt have long since sufficed, — yet as indications of character, they were not without some merit. One slight additional incident drawn from my own experience, and we will dismiss our Southern dinner to take its place with other departed festivals and ghosts of feasts.

When the "Ponche Bruliè," compounded by Major Favrand, and pretty nearly of the ingredients he enumerated, set on fire at the last and burned for some minutes before being partaken of, had been tasted and declared delicious, by all present, he rose from the central seat he occupied, after receiving an expressive glance from Madame Lavigne, and, not without much pomp of circumstance and real solemnity of manner, prepared to cut the celebrated Calhoun Cake, which had been made the theme of Sylphy's story and the exterior of which she had described with considerable accuracy.

Major Favrand was evidently in earnest now; indeed his eager and concentrated looks surprised me, on what seemed to me so unimportant an occasion. I did not know at that time what a bitter and uncompromising partisan he was, nor read, beneath his frivolous exterior, the resolution and desperation of his character whenever its peculiarities were excited, more especially when its political depths were stirred. All this was reserved for later discovery.

When a large section of the cake had been divided, by the high priest of the occasion, turning up as black an interior, beneath its snowy surface, as ever did Illinois mould to the furrow of the plough, and lying temptingly afterwards in its fruity richness in the silver basket, which Jura solemnly tendered for its reception, preparatory to handing it around the table, as a sort of transubstantiation article of faith; Colonel Lavigne called on every guest to fill a bumper for the toast he was about to offer.

There was profound silence, while King was engaged in handing around the various wines in requisition for the pledge, until after every glass was filled. Then simultaneously, as in a church, and with a slight rustling of silken garments, the whole company rose to its feet, following the example of Colonel Lavigne, who with extended glass and uplifted, fervent face, as if about to offer prayer to the Most High, and in accents so clear and sonorous as to be highly impressive, pledged,—

"John C. Calhoun, as man, patriot, statesman — noblest, wisest, best!"

I was lifting my glass mechanically to my lips with the rest, when my eye was arrested by the stern and even stony expression of Captain Wentworth's face. He stood with his hand pressed firmly over the mouth of his level glass, the Calhoun Cake lying untouched on his plate, his eyes directed coldly forward on space, his whole appearance frozen and abstracted. Vernon and Gregory, I learned later, had followed his example, and involuntarily I put down my own glass untasted, more from amazement than any wish to imitate what I did not comprehend.

A moment later, the meaning of this mute by-play flashed suddenly over my mind. It was treasonable to drink that toast, in the eyes of all but partisans, and legitimate to refuse it. Nor was it to be expected that loyal thinkers should be swept in and merged in local opinions, merely because of accidental minority.

On these grounds I was glad that I had forborne to join in the pledge; and yet, I felt equally desirous that no offence might be given or taken by such a course, certainly enforced by the conduct of Colonel Lavigne himself, who, as host, should have considered the feelings of every one present, individually.

Allegiance, instinctive and strong, I had indeed felt from the first, to the South, such as seemed to have arisen from some former, forgotten life-stream, imbibed perhaps from her own breast. Such at least was the suggestion of fancy, though in sober reality I found that I could offer no better reason than temperament, which made it no difficult matter for me to embrace readily her habits and institutions. This new phase of feeling I had not anticipated, however; nor indeed until that day, had I given the recent political question that had agitated our land, much consideration.

I saw from that moment, as with a prophetic glance, what I still believe to be inevitable, future dissension, if not direful dissolution. I saw, too, that as a patriotic citizen of the United States, no man or woman could conscientiously confirm the sectional sentiments prevailing in the region in which I then found myself. To do this, was to encourage family dissensions, already at work in the body politic. It was to prefer courtesy to principle.

After the Calhoun toast had been drank with enthusiasm, a few others were proposed, in all of which Captain Wentworth and his aides joined heartily. But I chose to leave my wine untasted on each occasion, though probably unobserved in every succeeding demonstration, as I hoped the first had been.

"Our Navy" — "Our Engineering Corps" — "Our Corps Diplomatic," were all pledged in succession; and, finally as we rose to leave the table, "The Ladies, God bless them!" was offered by Major Favrand, and drank with enthusiasm, by the gentlemen, standing.

It was not long, however, before most of them followed us to the drawing-room, where Miss Lurlie was already wailing in the most approved operatic and mermaidish fashion, accompanied by her Count, who in accordance with the habits of his country, rose from table with the ladies, and who sang like a cultivated — tree-frog, there being neither variety nor melody in his monotonous chanting. His attitude on such occasions was, however, both imposing and conventional. He stood with his chapeau bras, pressed

tightly to his shirt bosom, with one open jewelled hand; his head thrown back — his eyes half closed — his mouth distorted by an agonizing smile, supporting himself with his disengaged hand, on the piano or the back of a chair — his whole position suggestive of gargling for a sore throat, under almost insuperable difficulties.

After this melodramatic exhibition was over, simpler music succeeded. "Alice Grey," The Miller's Daughter," "Kelvin Grove," "Here's a health to thee Mary," (Barry Cornwall's exquisite song) then in vogue. Praed's thrilling "Tell him I love him yet," Mrs. Hemans's then popular "O'er the dark blue Ocean," and "Oh, cast that shadow from thy brow," with its grand Beethoven symphony, were each and all called for and approved. I was singing the last, when Captain Wentworth approached the piano, and stood silently listening until the conclusion of that passionate appeal, or song, if such indeed it be; and the few words he uttered were significant of approval and comparison both, though terse and cool.

"What surpasses Beethoven? What equals the vernacular?" adding after a pause, "Well done, Miss Harz," with a significance of eye and accent that gave me room to suspect that his commendation reached over and beyond my music and embraced my "masterly inactivity" on the occasion of the toast, a quality it may be remembered, he once disputed the existence of in women.

"One song more if you please, before you rise, one that you rarely sing, something for me to remember as belonging to you exclusively." He spoke in low, intense tones. He bent above me with an expression that commanded me, and almost unconsciously an old Spanish air, that I had long ceased to sing, arose to my lips, linked with a few careless verses, that had come to me, I scarce knew whence or how. The words are little worth, without the melody, to which they were singularly suited; yet I give them as they stand, and leave the air to the musical imagination of my reader.

"Gaze not on me with those eyes dark and tender,
Lift from mine aspect their sorrowful splendor
Between us are lying a grave and a shrine,
Entreat me not, love, with that deep glance of thine!

"Coldly I move where the festal is gleaming,
Walking apart like a sleeper in dreaming,
Rouse me not yet, from that vision divine,
Upbraid me not, love, with that sad glance of thine!

"Well have I loved thee and long have I striven —
To the heart's sources the arrow is driven,
Yet to the last — give the cold world no sign,
Betray me not, love, with that dark glance of thine!"

"Beautiful!" said Major Favrand, applauding noiselessly with a paper-cutter and feather fan; "Strange I never heard that before, with all that I do hear in that line! I believe you improvised it, Miss Harz."

"No, no indeed! I did no such thing; I would not have you think so." I felt myself flushing and growing confused, and Major Favrand might have turned away much flattered, had not his attention been distracted at the very nick of time, by a summons from Madge across the room, who wanted to consult him about getting up a charade.

"And equally strange that I, who hear so little in that line should have somewhere in the dim kingdom of the long ago, heard that air," said Captain Wentworth, musingly. "But the words, the mere words are yours, I am sure of it. Tell me about that song."

"The air was one I had often heard my poor mamma sing — I never had the music. The words came of their own accord I believe. There, that is all I know about that song. Are you satisfied?"

"You are a poet then?"

"Oh! no, the merest rhymer."

"A passionate one at least. Those words seemed heart-felt."

"Scarcely," I smiled, "unless indeed the imagination may be said to have a heart of its own as well as the affections. A kind of brain heart. Do you understand that?"

"Not clearly; I, you know am a very practical person, not up to clairvoyance, but really fond of poetry in my way. Show me some of yours, won't you?"

"Yes, if you desire; I make no mystery of anything I do in that line; but if you expect to be entertained or interested, you will be much disappointed."

"When shall I see your poems?"

"I will give you one within a few days, that occurs to me at this moment, as bearing singularly on that first conversation of ours in the library. Yet it was written months ago. It is a mere allegory."

"Dealing in generalities then. You keep me standing in the vestibule, while you affect confidence."

"Have I not told you I made no mystery of my petty gift? It is no more I assure you, and I shall have a very poor opinion of your taste, if you admire anything I have written."

"My vanity condemns me to be censorious in that case. Now that is hard!"

"No, I will not brook censure, nor discussion of any kind; so that if I give you my poem it is to be a sealed book between us, forevermore."

"To hear is to obey; but you know you reduce me to mere cipherage by such a sentence. You have already pronounced me critical or nothing."

"Ah! it is better to be nothing than critical sometimes. But I must leave you; I have an engagement with Madame Favrand. She wants to hear me talk, she says — how flattering! That is what purchasers always say about parrots, before they buy them, you know."

"The Major has been describing you, no doubt, in his enthusiastic way. But I will not detain you from that enchanting woman longer."

He withdrew quietly, and a few moments later I found myself near Madame Favrand. I was charmed by the grace and sweetness of her manners, and the chosen beauty of her expressions. Her thoughts did indeed seem pearls, strung on a golden thread. Refinement was visible in every movement, every act, and there was a deprecating sadness in her whole air that affected me very painfully, in addition to what I knew of her ill-starred destiny.

Ill health had beatified, while it undermined her beauty. Her brow and cheeks were sunken and sallow, but clear as wax; and the blue veins on temples and throat and chin were as distinct as if traced externally. She had the indestructible beauty of feature, however, even in that premature decay, which had dimmed her eye and traced white lines in her smooth, dark hair, and tinged her once exquisite teeth with a faint blueness, like pearls that have been too often washed in fresh water. Patient suffering was traced in every line of her face, in every tone of her low, sweet voice, in every movement of her shadowy hands.

She was the embodiment of gentleness and the guardian angel of her husband, who, but for her restraining influence, would no doubt have plunged into the sea of dissipation.

Even then, he was meditating for that tender being, a

blow as useless as it was cruel. She who was like a flower that one rude shock might crush, and on whose brow approaching doom was written so clearly, that one that ran, might read. But so far his threatened blow was mercifully concealed from her.

It was while we sat together, that Major Favrand, as the result of an hour's scribbling at the centre-table, brought to us, the conversational items I have elsewhere recorded — indeed, nothing but the remonstrances of his wife, prevented his handing them about the room for general inspection, so careless was he of consequences.

"It is his way, Miss Harz," she complained; "he caricatures everything. And yet how can one help being amused? wrong as it is to laugh at one's friends and neighbors." And she glanced at him admiringly.

He took her small, frail hand and pressed it to his lips, bending low to reach it.

"All are not like you," he said, "my peerless pearl, you who respect the feelings of the meanest, and step aside to let the worm crawl by securely."

"Oh, Victor!" drawing her hand away gently, "what will Miss Harz think of us? Such old married people too. She will laugh at such follies. She cannot keep pace with your impulses, being a stranger."

"Miss Harz is an honest-hearted woman, though she has the good fortune to be young and attractive, and can make allowances for earnest affection even if it has its inconvenient and egotistical tides. The truth is, Celia, I am despondent to-night for all my folly. Cowper wrote 'John Gilpin,' you know, in a fit of the blackest blues."

She shook her head mournfully.

"You must not be thinking of that always, my dear, dear love. The expiation has been so perfect;" I heard her say in her low silvery accents. "Miss Harz, you cannot think what a tender conscience Victor has. He ought to be a Catholic."

"What, with Hugueuot blood in my veins, Celia! You dream, my love."

He spoke a little sternly I thought, with averted face.

"Ah! true, true, I had forgotten. I always do about that. But it seems to me a very comforting religion. Don't you think so, Miss Harz?"

"Indeed I do. And yet I would not choose to be a

Catholic. I love my liberty too well. I fear I am not very religiously inclined, though I try very hard to love God and do right. But one fails sadly unaided."

"Yes, truly, without the support of a Higher Power, our own resolutions would most often come to nought. Christ is a pillar of strength to the weak and disconsolate," and she sighed deeply, smiling the next moment.

All at once Major Favrand started to his feet, throwing aside, as if it were a mantle he dropped behind him by undoing the clasps, the deep gloom that had oppressed him so visibly during the last half hour.

"The charade is commencing, as I live!" he exclaimed, "and I am not ready for my part of the performance. They have rigged it up in the library I believe. Follow the stream, ladies, if you wish to see me as a "High priest of Venus,' my specialty some say; Au revoir;" and kissing the tips of his fingers lightly, and for the nonce forgetting his military carriage, Major Favrand literally bounded away.

"You see how mercurial Victor is, Miss Harz. But let us go; I suppose it will be a pretty sight." And we proceeded together to the theatre of action.

The library, a large room, had been divided by a green baize curtain and there were seats for a goodly audience. We had not long to wait for the first scene and syllable of the charade, heralded as such by Mr. Gregory, the prompter, disguised in an Oriental costume, as far at least, as such marked individuality as he possessed, could be travestied.

THE FIRST SCENE

represented a group of young girls dressed in the Greek costume, bearing wreaths of myrtle, which each one held high above her head, so as to present it fully to the audience, while they stood linked in a circle significant of the syllable that commenced the words.

MUSIC.

"O! where's the slave so lowly."

Curtain falls.

SCENE SECOND

heralded by Mr. Gregory, or the prompter, as an interlude

expressive of what was to follow, not of a syllable at all, yet important to the sense of the charade.

MUSIC.

"I'll watch for thee from my lonely bower."

A lonely chamber is represented, in which a taper burns low, beside a couch draped in white. A figure of Cupid fills a niche above it, and a girl dressed in the robes of a priestess, and crowned with myrtle and roses, while she holds a nestling dove to her bosom, stands beside it in a graceful attitude, eager, watchful, expectant.

Beautiful indeed, with her long, white, floating drapery and veil, and pale and perfect face seemed Marion. Suddenly the roaring of the storm is heard without. She starts, approaches the long window (giving on the gallery, be it remembered, but supposed to overlook the ocean), loosens her dove (a tame, white pigeon very glad to escape), then wildly clasping her hands, rushes after it into the outer darkness.

Curtain falls.

SCENE THIRD

announced by the prompter as "containing three syllables, and all the gist of the performance."

MUSIC.

"Farewell, farewell to thee, Araby's daughter,"

and the song of Ariel, in three voices, slightly altered for the occasion.

"Full fathom five thy lover lies."

SCENE THIRD

Same apartment; the figure of a young man is seen lying on the white couch surrounded by veiled figures, plunged in grief. A winding sheet covers his insensible form, revealing alone his head, with his dripping hair, bare feet and arms, the last hanging loosely to the floor. We recognize the delicate and heroic features of Mr. Vernon who plays the part of "drowned, drowned," to perfection.

Suddenly the priestess returns bearing a cresset in her hand, and shading her eyes as if emerging from storm and darkness. She enters through the window, dishevelled, haggard, agonized — her wreath and veil partly torn away — her hair hanging about her shoulders. She approaches the couch wildly, staggers back, drops the lamp she holds (which gives forth a faint perfume in dying, like burning sandal-wood), raises her hands to heaven, then falls forward fainting at the foot of the couch.

MUSIC.

Curtain falls.

"The dead march in Saul."

SCENE FOURTH [THE END].

A solemn procession of veiled virgins, bearing a bier, covered with white and preceded by the High Priest of Venus (whom we recognize at a glance as Major Favrand), bearing an oleander branch, which he waves solemnly above the dead. He then pauses and in most expressive pantomime explains to the spectators, the manner in which the youthful couple met their fate. The one by the overwhelming billows, the other by leaping into the sea from her tower. After which, again flourishing his branch, he signifies the word.

OLEANDER.

It was a very ingenious little affair, certainly, and as an impromptu matter did credit to the versatile genius of Major Favrand. The performance wound up with the laughable farce of the spoken charade "Pilgrim," for which we have neither room nor memory, written by Mr. Gregory, and in which he performed a principal character, that of the "Pilgrim," himself, returning from his journey to Loretto with boiled peas in his shoes. The suggestion will be found in the poems of Wolcott, in his day surnamed "Peter Pindar."

Here ends the account of the New Year's festivities at Beauseincourt. Here also endeth our farce, and now beginneth our tragedy.

BOOK FOURTH.

BOOK FOURTH.

"The feast was o'er at Branksome tower,
And the lady had gone to her secret bower,
Jesu Maria, shield us well."

SCOTT.

"I am a murderer!
That hideous name befits me. I have sent him
To his dread debit. Pho! his blood will redden
Upon my hand forever — wretch that I am."

WILSON'S CITY OF THE PLAGUE.

"Sleep, sleep; forget thy pain,
My hand is on thy brow,
My spirit on thy brain,
My pity on thy heart, poor friend,
And from my fingers flow
The powers of life, and like a sign,
Seal thee from thine hour of woe
And brood on thee, but may not blend with thine."

SHELLEY'S MAGNETIC LADY.

"Fate hath no voice but the heart's impulses;
I am all his; his present; his alone.
In this new life that lives in me, he hath
A right to his own creature. What was I,
Ere his fair love infused a soul in me?"

SCHILLER'S THEKLA.

"And who feels discord now, or sorrow?
Love is the universe to-day;
These are the slaves of dim to-morrow
Darkening life's labyrinthine way."

SHELLEY'S FRAGMENTS.

BOOK FOURTH.

CHAPTER XII.

THE incursion of the Gauls and Vandals, as Bertie called them, was over at Beauseincourt for the time being, and matters settled down again into their pristine condition of monotonous regularity. Mr. Maginnis had borne away in his gig, as on a triumphal car, the master of the festivities, suddenly summoned (and it may have been through this substantial guest himself) to New Orleans on imperative business with his merchants, as Madame Lavigne surmised.

"This is but the beginning of the end, Miriam," she had said to me sadly. "No man was ever more unfit to contend with financial harassments than my husband. And there was that look in his eyes I never like to see, when he went away with that bloodsucker, the man whose advances to him have already so deeply involved Beauseincourt; that crafty, detestable Scotchman! Heaven forgive me! I grudged every mouthful of food Maginnis ate at my table, every breath he drew in my house. His presence made this whole celebration bitter and painful to me. He is a bachelor, you know, and he actually had the audacity — it is almost too mortifying to tell" — she added, hesitating and flushing, while she clasped her hands nervously — "don't ever allude to it again Miriam, but he absolutely had the audacious presumption to propose for Marion! There, what do you think of that! and the worst of it is, that Colonel Lavigne laughed the matter off. I wanted him to resent it on the spot, to order him away, as he should have done — would have done, perhaps, but for those dreadful obligations."

"I cannot conceive that advances of money made on interest and mortgage can be construed as obligations," I replied, "and it would scarcely have been just to treat the offer of Mr. Maginnis, absurd as it may appear, in the light of an insult."

"That is your Northern coolness," she remarked dryly; "but we Southerners have very different ideas on the subject. Who is this Mr. Maginnis, that he dared aspire to the hand of a Lavigne?" and her usually mild features were set in scorn. "A mere nobody, of common foreign parentage, no doubt, and who has never seen the interior of a college in his life. A creature reared to trade! Rich, certainly, but no more, and evidently trying to take advantage of our necessities, in daring to propose such an alliance! such an alternative perhaps! One I shudder but to think of embracing."

"Has Marion been told of it?" I asked.

"No, and I hope she never may be. She would be excessively mortified at such a communication. Marion is very proud, though diffident."

"They are frequent companions," I observed, musingly.

"I really thought Miriam," she pursued, "that it was you Maginnis was smitten with, until he came out bluntly and broadly to Colonel Lavigne the day before they left Beauseincourt."

"That would have seemed more suitable in your eyes," I said, smiling as I spoke, for I thought it natural she should think so.

"Not at all," she answered, with evident embarrassment; "Mr. Maginnis is too old and commonplace entirely, to suit *any* young girl. But his great wealth might bear him through under some conditions. I do not know your views on this subject, Miriam," hesitating. "It is, even more than his age and homeliness, his obscurity and want of breeding, that *we* object to."

"What would you think of Mr. Vernon for Marion? Madame Lavigne," I digressed. "He is well-bred, certainly!"

"What, that penniless adventurer?" she queried sharply in return, and evidently much disconcerted. "You cannot think there is any fancy in that direction! Mr. Duganne is the person she prefers of all others, I am certain. They have been friends since she was a child and he a young col-

'ege student; and he has Huguenot blood in his veins as good as her own. He is not very rich, it is true, but well off, and a perfect gentleman."

"He struck me as rather a dissipated-looking young man," I observed quietly, "and he certainly is somewhat unprepossessing in his appearance. Arrogant too, in his manners. Now Mr. Vernon is temperate and amiable, one sees at a glance, courteous, accomplished and unusually good-looking; and I frankly confess to you, I think he is falling desperately in love with Marion. So if you have any objections to reciprocity on her part, you had better be on your guard at once."

"He leaves here in a day or two," she said sententiously, after consideration. "I shall take care that he comes no more. In the meantime I shall trust to my daughter's good sense and fidelity to her old attachment. We have always looked on that marriage as a settled thing on both sides. Alfred Duganne's mother is a widow, and he will continue to manage her estate and live at 'Bosworth' even after his marriage. His is a very responsible position."

"Fore-warned — fore-armed!" I had done my duty, and it was not for me to press this matter farther; that was not my concern. But I felt from the beginning that Alfred Duganne stood small chance against Charles Vernon, should the latter choose to prefer his suit to the already evidently favorably impressed Marion.

"I suppose Mr. Wentworth and his train, are all Northern men;" she added after a pause, "*though* the Captain himself seems very gentlemanly, and looks even aristocratic!"

"He is a Virginian, I discovered some time ago, which may account for this," I rejoined, smiling at her simplicity, "and of good family. No doubt you knew the Earl of Strafford's family name was Wentworth!" A careless remark, intended to tell, however, as it did.

"Ah! I did not know, or had forgotten the fact. The Earl of Strafford! Ah! yes, I remember now, the man whose head Charles the First suffered to be cut off. But what for, I forget? something very wicked no doubt, since our martyr king (she was a High Church Episcopalian) was always in the right. But I am getting very rusty in my history. I must read up a little, or my own children will put me to shame soon, under your tuition."

"Mr. Gregory is from Maryland," I resumed, but Mr.

Vernon is a native of the extreme North, not a Laplander however, as Bertie calls him. He is from Bangor, Maine, and a graduate of a New England University of some repute —no other than Yale. He spent several years abroad with Captain Wentworth, but Gregory is a new addition to the staff, a stranger to both. He is a very pleasant, bright fellow by the way, though Bertie says he looks like a 'Japanese Damio' or her idea of one. But nothing to compare with Vernon, either as to looks or manner."

"Oh, Maryland against Maine, any day, of course Miriam! Now the Middle States are all very well in their way. But those extreme Northern settlements are my absolute aversion — I myself, think them little better than Esquimaux! I never saw a Yankee yet that I could abide;" with a slight shudder.

It was all over with Vernon now in that quarter it was plain. He ranked very little above Maginnis henceforth, in the estimation of the mistress of Beauseincourt. But I thought it best for Marion's happiness that everything should be laid open at once and before her feelings were at stake or compromised too deeply to be withdrawn. As to poor Vernon, his was a case of love at first sight undisguisedly, and like all other eruptive diseases, this has its limit, when not made chronic by sympathy, and cures itself naturally through the absence and indifference, one or both, of its object. I felt that the cautery had better be applied at once to the wound, however occasioned, by the cutting off of his budding hopes, (to continue as well as change my medical metaphor,) in justice and in mercy both. But my own sympathies were, confessedly, all on his side.

To vegetate on a Southern plantation, and year by year feel the shackles of prejudice and circumstance more closely confirmed by necessity, did not seem to me the most desirable of conditions "noblesse oblige" notwithstanding; Marion was made for better things, it appeared to my mind, than to rust in apathy in a comfortable hermitage, and live in the shadow of mediocrity, self-conceit and dissipation. For me there was no prestige in the mere name of planter.

The world was all before Charlie Vernon, with his energies, virtues and attainments, and in possession of an unfailing means of livelihood, if not of distinction. But Alfred Duganne might as well have been Robinson Crusoe or a Brahmin of caste for all the variety such an association promised; nor

was he the person exactly, one would have selected to perform "Suttee" for, or as a companion for a life-long residence on a desert island!

Captain Wentworth lingered with his aides beyond the time he had appointed for his departure, nor did this delay tend to foster the vanity of any one at Beauseincourt, since he remained avowedly to suit his own convenience, and, after the departure of Colonel Lavigne, strictly isolated. Except at meals and on very rare occasions in the evening, he was much engaged in the library with pen, ink, and paper, in pursuance of his professional plans, as we supposed.

It was remarked, however, as something singular, that Mr. de Bonville, whose abode was ten miles distant from Beauseincourt, and Mr. Duganne, who resided near him, came together early one morning, soon after the breaking up of the New Year's party, from the direction of Bellevue and without asking for any of the ladies, were closeted above an hour in the library with Captain Wentworth, after which they departed as quietly as they came.

It was at dinner-time that day, that the last mentioned gentleman, asked permission of Madame Lavigne to extend his stay at Beauseincourt for a few days, adding that business of an interesting and unexpected nature had arisen, to make it necessary for him to remain somewhat longer in the vicinity than he had at first intended doing.

"Were there a lodging house within reach," he said, addressing Madame Lavigne, "or were it worth while to ask you for the key of your son Walter's cottage for so brief a period, which Colonel Lavigne obligingly offered to place at my disposition for the remainder of the season, and where with my servant's aid and the assistance of our guns, we could all live very comfortably without troubling you so greatly — I would not trespass further on your generous hospitality, kindest of ladies. But I think when you learn what my business is, you will not consider me a capricious intruder; and when all is satisfactorily settled, I shall apprize you, and depart," adding cheerfully, a moment later, "I fancy you will be astonished at the revelations that await you." No further explanation was vouchsafed. But But I did not like his forced smile and gloomy eyes.

"How do you know that we have not found a vein of gold on your estate, Madame Lavigne?" added Luke Gregory archly, helping himself to gravy as he spoke.

"Or a scorpion's nest?" said Vernon, grimly, glancing at the last speaker askance.

"Ah, gentlemen! it is much more probably the last, than the first," said Madame Lavigne, plaintively. "Our luck has never been to strike a golden vein yet; but however it may be, rest assured that you are perfectly welcome to such shelter as Beauseincourt affords, as long as you choose to share it. And do not think me so inquisitive as to wish to pry into affairs that in no way concern me, I beg of you."

Captain Wentworth replied only by an expressive bow; but Gregory ran on in his usual flippant and fluent strain.

"Now that hint about gold is not so fabulous as you might suppose. I have had advices that such streaks do exist not very far from here. And a tract of land belonging to infant heirs in Pennsylvania, lying in this vicinity, which is too poor to bring black-eyed peas, is whispered to be the burial place of King Midas himself! I am to have a noble commission if I identify this fact to the satisfaction of Mr. Bainrothe, the guardian of the heir or heirs concerned, *before* next summer. By the way, is it not rather strange to limit a man absolutely as to time in this way? What can his motive be? The whole business rests on this contingency. What do you think of it, Wentworth?"

The sound of my guardian's name so suddenly and unexpectedly spoken, paralyzed me for a moment. But the vague question, to which no one could give a satisfactory reply, might have been readily answered, had I chosen to take up the clue of enquiry and reply to it succinctly. My majority would occur in the coming September, and his undoubted object was to grasp the golden treasure of minors and Midas as well, if possible (as he had done all the rest), before that event.

"We will enquire into this matter more closely hereafter," said Captain Wentworth, "if time be afforded us. But Gregory! never lend yourself to the injury of infant heirs — to which this measure seems to point! This guardian may be armed with power to sell, or to appropriate the proceeds of the estate up to a certain time. Whose was it, Gregory?"

"The name escapes me, but I have it somewhere among my papers. Not here, however. The tract of land has been very exactly described to me. It is one known as the

'Calvert Clearing,' and can readily be identified, I doubt not, chart in hand, when I have time to investigate matters. The Cohoot river runs through it, and it is laid open literally, I am told, by bayous, like a German student's face with gashes and gaping wounds. It was given in payment of a bad debt, by the bank of Pennsylvania, or rather the president of that bank in a sudden fit of romantic compensatory generosity, for it seems that this estate, like a thousand others, sustained shipwreck when that brillant bubble broke, and the difference was, that the owner thereof had been the personal friend of the conscientious banker.

"All this Bainrothe told me in his own very agreeable and off-hand way. I saw him in Washington, just before he went to Paris, where he is now sojourning, I believe. At least he said any letters addressed to the care of Robert Walch, our Consul there, would reach him with certainty and promptness. His son was about to marry a beautiful English lady of rank, when we parted, an earl's daughter, I think he told me, and he himself was going abroad, he declared, to take the first recreation of his industrious lifetime."

"And the infant heirs, what of them?" Captain Wentworth asked persistently.

"The heir, or heiress or heirs, I do not know which, were not spoken of further than to acknowledge the existence of such a being or beings. Of course it was not my business to enquire about him, or her or them. I am a mere agent, you know, for the transaction of certain affairs for their benefit;" rubbing his hands cheerfully.

"For their benefit I hope; but this limitation of time is very singular, Gregory! I would wager my right hand, although I know nothing of Mr. Bainrothe, that one of them comes of age at the period of the expiration of that limit which is made conditional with you. What commission was proposed?"

"The whole of the first year's proceeds," was the prompt reply, "or its equivalent, whether the land was sold or remained unsold. There is no doubt at all in the mind of Mr. Bainrothe that the place is rich in gold from what he has heard, but he wanted certainty, and did me the honor to consider me both sagacious and responsible enough to be entrusted with the prosecution of the affair."

"He could not have selected better," observed Captain

Wentworth, a little dryly I thought, and the discussion was dropped as suddenly as it had been taken up, being a matter of particular interest to no one present as far as it appeared on the surface.

"I wish you would keep Marion as much engaged as possible in the schoolroom, my dear Miriam," said Madame Lavigne to me. "Could you not continue some extra task to keep her out of this Vernon's way?"

"Not with justice to her or myself either," I replied seriously. "I am perfectly willing that she should know what I have said to you, if you think it for the best to tell her. But I cannot circumvent her. This does not belong either to my inclination or ability. *You*, as her mother, must take the entire management of her time after school hours. She is my friend now; I will not make her my enemy henceforth, even to obey you, who are so kind to me and whom I both love and honor; but if you would like me to talk to her plainly about the matter I will do so, and this would be the best way to proceed, I fancy." The answer came impetuously,—

"No, no! not for worlds! You do not know the Lavigne nature surely, or you would not propose such a measure. It is very unapproachable on all subjects of delicacy, open as it seems."

"There is nothing very serious so far," I remarked, "on her side at least, I am certain. Be present at their interviews. This is all that is required; that is, if you do seriously object to Mr. Vernon's attentions."

"Object! of course I do! What do we know of Mr. Vernon? What can we know?"

"His endorser is with him," I alleged confidently. "Captain Wentworth has known him from boyhood, and approves of him in every way. Besides, that face of his speaks volumes! eloquent as it is with truth, feeling, fancy."

"But Captain Wentworth himself is a stranger, though recommended by our dear son. Walter is but a boy — he is governed by his feelings, too, altogether. I have investigated their acquaintance and find that it began at Odessa and ran its course on shipboard. No, no Miriam Harz! when my daughters marry it must be with those we know — whose families we have long known."

"And known perhaps but little good of," I could not help murmuring in rejoinder. Though wrapt in anxious reverie, she either heard or heeded not my remark, and so we parted in silence a few moments later.

Gazing out from that high dormer window, my own peculiar watch-tower, which commanded so fine a view of the surrounding country, and from which Colonel Lavigne had first directed my attention to Bellevue, I saw, one dusky December evening, two gentlemen practising at a mark with pistols in the grounds of our neighbor, and by the aid of my lorgnette, which I found a valuable assistant to my view in the absence of the field-glass, when it suited me to gaze out and away, and lose sight for awhile of the narrow precincts of the schoolroom, I distinguished the forms of Mr. de Bonville and Major Favrand as those of the marksmen.

A more innocent way of passing time, which, in the estimation of such men, seems only intended for killing, could scarcely have been devised it seemed to me, nor yet a more entirely selfish and useless one. "Why cannot they come to Beauseincourt and enliven us a little, instead of peppering an insensible target?" I thought, recalling the promise of Major Favrand to pass an evening with us before very long, (yet unfulfilled), and remembering with pleasure and with amusement many of his odd sayings and saucy ways, the fun of which would scarcely seem transmissible to my reader, who no doubt agrees with Rosalind that "a jest's prosperity lies in the ear of him that hears it."

It had indeed been rather dull at Beauseincourt, since the dispersion of the New Year's party. Colonel Lavigne's only partially explained absence seemed to weigh heavily on the spirits of his wife. The gentlemen who still remained with us were grave, and, as I have said, self-absorbed of late as a general thing, and Marion and Madge seemed unusually silent and distrâites. As for Bertie, she had a periodical fit of the dumps, in unison with the weather, which was again bleak, raw, and rainy, almost verifying the descriptions of Madge. Had it not have been for Laura and Louey, who seemed to revive like flowers bent down by heavy showers, after the ponderous weight of the imported element of social enjoyment was withdrawn, there would scarcely have been a gleam of sunshine at Beauseincourt to break the intolerable gloom. For again the cloud of nameless and vague discontent and depression enveloped my nature and kept me

apart from all surrounding influences, grave or gay. An ominous mood indeed, this seemed at last! One which I vainly strove against, prophetic as it was perhaps! One that I have never since disregarded.

I was aroused about sunrise one morning, or rather at that hour near which according to the asssertions of almanacs, the sun was due in the latitude of "Lesdernier," by the vehement panting without, and bumping against that door of my chamber giving on the gallery, of the great Newfoundland dog "Ossian," with which worthy quadruped my reader is already slightly acquainted. Finding him singularly and annoyingly pertinacious in his efforts to obtain admission, I rose at last from my pillow, without disturbing Bertie, who was sleeping with me on this occasion, and opened the door ajar, with the view of driving him back, and rebuking him for his untimely visit. He managed however to thrust his nose against my white night-dress, staining it to my horror with blood; and seizing it a moment later by the hem, between his teeth, he tried to draw me after him through the aperture. I closed the door instantly and firmly against him. At which rejection he set up a prolonged and piteous howl, wild as the night-wind, and dismal as an owlet's hooting. Different was it from any sound I had ever before heard issue from the throat of a mournful dog!

"What if he should be mad?" I thought, but the idea was dismissed about at soon as entertained. There evidently was "method in his madness." His teeth had not impressed themselves in gory marks in my dress, it was only his nose that was bloody, and he sat now patiently outside of the door, having exhausted his vocabulary of grief it seemed, occasionally slamming his massive tail up and down on the floor, and giving utterance to a long, whining yawn, as was his custom when weary of waiting at the schoolroom door for mine or Bertie's egress.

My resolution was taken at once. Something unusual had oocurred it was plain, or the dog would never have plucked at my garments in so urgent a manner; and that bloody muzzle of his was horribly suggestive!

I threw on my dressing-gown, thrust my feet in my slippers, wound up my hair hastily and opening and closing the door softly and suddenly, to preclude his entrance, found myself at once received into the rapturous embrace of Ossian. After a moment spent in disentangling myself

from his paws, at a signal from me, he bounded forward across the gallery and down the back staircase, looking back momentarily, to make sure of my company. Following him as fast as I could, I soon found myself in the servant's premises. Sylphy was poised as I entered the pantry on a broom, listening with grave attention to some communication that King with his left hand and arm thrust into a long and shapely boot, while his right wielded the blacking-brush with artistic dexterity, was making to her, while Sip, with a pair of shining Wellingtons dangling from his hands, was standing open-mouthed at the door of entrance, and Jura shaking his melancholy head over an astral lamp he was trimming and arranging, with a slow precision peculiar to his temperament and training.

As quickly as ever the witch of Fife sped away on her broomstick, Sylphy vanished on perceiving me, and I soon heard her long, light strokes with the sweeping brush, resound from the neighboring gallery, where she was plying her diligent vocation, silently, for a wonder. For she was one of those born chatterboxes who talk even when alone, a custom unjustly assigned to persons of a higher race by some novelists ; but which I have never seen realized, except in the case of negroes and lunatics. Jura and King both acknowledged my presence however, by stopping their several employments and bowing according to their wont, the one profoundly, the other superciliously.

The dog in the meantime was standing in grave majesty at the steps of the gallery with his tail and ears erect and his great, dark, eager eye fixed on my face ; the whole attitude one of impatient expectation, if not command.

"Jura," I said, "I have come down stairs in consequence of Ossian's strange behavior to make some enquiries. He came to my door awhile since and thrust a bloody nose against my dress and begged me to accompany him, almost as plainly as if he had spoken in so many words. What can ail the dog?"

"Dunno, Miss Miriam!" interpolated King, officiously, plying his brush again with renewed vigor ; while Jura opened and shut his grave, responsible mouth several times, in a sort of fish-like dumbness, a gasping silence, very suggestive of restrained emotion and mystery. "Dunno, indeed! dat dog always was queer; more like human dan brute sort seems to me, in some ob his fashions! I 'spec'

he done killed a rabbit, or a a mink, mebbe — he, he, he! and tinks hissef great tings on dis 'casion like oder poor hunters. Dat dog eats more 'an a Christian any way, an' don't airn his vittles by de longest! He's de laziest ob all de dog tribe, I does belebe, and Masta dese days jes' spiles dat creeter wus dan he ebber spilt Jumbo. I don tole him so more'n oncest. He don't begin to be worf a good cur dog for catching wild varmints and making his own libelihood, he don't dat!" with a knowing dip of the head.

During this hastily delivered and somewhat irrelevant tirade evidently made to distract my attention and relieve Jura, the elder servant was snipping away pensively at the wick of a sperm-oil lamp, the bright appurtenances of which were spread around him on a tray, and shaking his head dolefully over the extinguished luminary.

"Jura, I spoke to *you*," I said, gravely, "I insist upon an answer. King! be silent," seeing that flippant wight again about to take the initiative, "take up your boots and go immediately to the gallery, sir; Sip, depart;" pointing to the door, sternly; "I wish to see Jura alone. Now, what is it, old man," with clasped hands, "speak plainly, for I see you have your suspicions;" and my whole manner changed to one of entreaty.

"De fact is, Miss Miriam, I doesn't know what to do, nor whar to turn. I has been conjoined to silence by bof of de principal parties, an' my feelins' pulls me one way an' my honorble duty, de oder. You mout be ob some use and den agin you moutn't. I reckon I'd best be mum, on dis occasion; women folk have got no call any way to tend on pistol shot wounds, 'specially wen de doctor's nearby, wid all dc bandages and fixins, and plasters, and insterments, jes' to his right hand! Dar's Aunt Felicity down wid de rheumatiz dis day, or she'd be after me, widout subsistence, I has no airthly doubt, to fine out every ting. But Doctor Durand, sez he to me, (dese was his last words, Miss Mirime), sez he to me, 'Jura,' sez he, 'I knows your 'sponsible caracter; not a word to dem ladies! Dey is to be kep in 'gyptian darkness, Jura! like all women folk ought to be mos' ob de time, an'"—

"For God's sake, tell me what the matter *is!*" I interrupted him, passionately, "do you mean to say that murder has been done and that Doctor Durand knows of it?"

"I doesn't know what am de result yet, Miss Mirime,"

rejoined the imperturbable old servant. "Wen two gentlemen goes out to fight de 'duello,' (dat is de name our quality gibs dat sort of warfare ob conflic') why den, one or de oder am mos' likely to be killed dead, sartin sure! Dat is no more dan reasonable, an' right, an' honor'ble to expec'; but as to *murder*, Miss Merriam, dat's a berry different sort of affair, I takes it!" shaking his head, distinctively; "I'se surprised you's neber has heard dat difference *dis*pounded before, in de Norf country."

"No moralizing, Jura!" I exclaimed, coldly, desperately. "Content yourself with facts; speak to the point. Who have gone out to fight this duel? When or where did it take place? Answer me, old man, or I shall apprise Madame Lavigne, who will immediately question you more successfully than I can do, perhaps."

"Oh, not for de world, Miss Merriam! I'se sure you would not do dat," he said, piteously. "Mistis ailin' too! her self and so poorly, jes' now!" and in his anxiety he laid the fingers of one trembling hand upon my arm, instantly withdrawing them again, respectfully, "jes' have a little patience, Miss Mirime, and hear me out."

"No, I shall follow the dog. His feelings and instincts are more Christian, it seems, than yours. For if you *knew* of this duel, why are you not on the spot to render assistance? Your duties here could be postponed in the cause of humanity."

"Oh, Miss Mirime, Major Fabrand hab more darkies in call dan you can shake a stick at. An' Mr. Vernon, an' Mr. Gregory, an' Captain Wentworth dey all dar wid dat Irish nigger ob deirs, what dey brought along to do dere waitin' on. Wat call has I to go? Wen Doctor Durand says to me hissef, at daylight dis berry mornin' 'Now, Jura,' says he, 'keep this thing quiet at the Bosincore house; an' dem ladies 'specially, an' all de female sort in 'gyptian darkness about dis here "duello." All will be done right, Jura, but de feelin's ob dem womenkind must be reserved, an' I can obscure your attention by sendin' Patrick after you, should it be found advisable so to do, late in de scene of action.'"

"But the action is evidently over, Jura, and if only to know what has occurred, I must go, if, indeed, you will not," pausing desperately. "Do go, old man! It is a state of such wretched uncertainty to be in, nor is it fit that

I should go forward in this matter. For God's sake go, and bring me word," I implored passionately.

At this moment Ossian bounded forward with a loud, defiant bark. I followed him to the gallery steps and peered out as into darkness, from under my protecting hand into the cold, dull fog that obstructed the vision beyond a few rods from the house, and hung like a leaden curtain over woods and fields.

The tramp of steady feet was heard advancing, and as if dividing the hangings of a ghostly chamber, a strange and sad procession suddenly emerged from the dense, gray mist, which had concealed its approach hitherto, headed by Doctor Durand himself.

"Down, Ossian, down!" I heard him say hoarsely as the dog bounded forward. "A little faster, gentleman," in low, stern accents, "time is important now. This way if you please."

The four men, followed by a fifth, who were supporting a hastily constructed litter, on which was lying a motionless form, covered with a sweeping Spanish cloak, accelerated their even pace in accordance with this dignified direction, and without lifting their eyes from the ground, came steadily on to the gallery, like the pall-bearers in a church, or the mourners in Glenara, and ascended its steps carefully.

"Bear him into the library, gentlemen, if you please," said the doctor, saluting me slightly, and with constraint as he passed. "Wheel forward the leather-covered couch, Jura. Girl," to Sylphy, "throw an old coverlet over it, as quickly as possible, and don't alarm your mistress above all things. Miss Harz, I am sorry you have been disturbed so early. This is no place for you, I fear. Sustain Madame Lavigne, I entreat you, the shock may else overpower her; and by all means keep the young ladies away. We are obliged to be here, owing to circumstances, else"—

Without finishing his sentence, he turned and entered the library where a fire had already been kindled, above which he cowered a moment, while the four litter-bearers set down their helpless burden. In this position he continued to direct them.

"A little more brandy, Mr. Vernon; I shall be there presently, don't move him yet. Patrick, help Jura with the couch. Mr. Duganne, you will have to cut away the boot

with your knife, it is soaked, literally soaked with blood. Mr. Gregory, chafe his hands, if you please, with the camphorated spirits. No, Miss Harz, you can do nothing" — stepping to the door of the gallery, to reply to my agonized offer of assistance. "Absolutely nothing, unless you choose to scrape some more lint, mine is insufficient I see. Yes, it is a sad thing truly! Mortal? Oh, I cannot be certain yet. We shall see presently. Be firm my dear young lady; it is one of those things one has to make up one's mind to. But what made you think of Major Favrand in such connection?" smiling and rubbing his hands self-gratulatingly. "He is safe and sound at home, abiding the result, I am happy and proud to inform you. It is *only* Captain Wentworth who is wounded."

Good God! and I thought I saw him coming after the rest! Major Favrand! oh! what was he in comparison? What despair." Such was the cry of my heart, but I spoke no words to betray my sufferings. I clasped my hands in dumb agony and pressed them against my beating brow, suppressing the cries, the groans, that would fain have left my lips. In that instant of revelation, I saw by the lightning flash of aroused emotion, the humiliating truth! This acquaintance of ten days, was more to me than all the world, save Mabel! Yes, I would cheerfully have given my own life that hour, I felt, to have saved that of this utter stranger.

Up stairs again, and to work at the mechanical operation assigned to me, with what heart none can tell, save those who are obliged to conceal anxiety and forbear the presence of the sufferer in whom their interest is vital, in accordance with those laws that regulate that strange monster—society. I, so lonely, so desolate, so unloved, had caught too eagerly (I saw it then though never dreaming of the truth before) at the clue of hope that had been thrown down before me, at the ray of sunshine that had glanced across my path — vanished again into thickest gloom forever!

What was this man to me, that I should stake all hopes of happiness upon his life? What business of mine was it beyond mere humanity common to all, whether he lived or died? He, the acquaintance of a fortnight, not even a friend, far less an avowed lover. It was madness. I saw it now, too late! too late perhaps for my eternal peace!

Such were my thoughts as I sat sternly and monotonously

scraping the lint Doctor Durand had requested me to have in readiness, merely to employ me and get rid of my importunities, perhaps, with tears dropping on my hands, and a grasp of iron laid upon my throat.

"What's the matter dear Miss Harz?" said Bertie suddenly opening her eyes; "Has father come home? I thought I heard voices in the library, or is mother ill?" starting up in her bed. "One of them sounded in my dozing ears like Doctor Durand's."

"No, no child. It is simply a case of murder!" I answered, swallowing my tears literally. "Major Favrand it seems has been committing a crime — not his first I suppose by many." (These last words spoken between my set teeth.) "The cruel, merciless wretch!"

"Who is it this time?" she asked with provoking coolness. "He had young Juarez out before, Miss Lurlie's Spanish friend, our guest at the time, for uttering some heresy. Who now? Wentworth or Gregory I suppose. Vernon is too decidedly inoffensive even for his choleric majesty to pick a flaw in."

"Did he murder Juarez also?" I asked in an accent of bitter scorn. "Is it thus your father permits his guests to be stung to death by this ill-natured viper? Is the roof of Beauseincourt, no protection to its inmates?"

"Why, I thought you and Major Favrand were hand in glove, Miss Miriam. No, he did not murder Juarez. It was Hazlehurst, that he *killed* in a duel, if that is what you mean by murder; all blown over long since. But that was years ago, a mere political quarrel, I believe!"

"What fearful levity," I murmured, shuddering.

"Tout au contraire, as Count D' Agnaud would have said, Miss Harz; Juarez 'murthered' him," she continued speaking in a strong brogue, ("You see I have given the Bull its right accent) as he is living yet! Living and likely to live if I mistake not. He is invulnerable in all but his heel, I believe, like Achilles, or rather ankle. He limped for a twelvemonth after that duello, however, and Juarez escaped unharmed, which we were all glad of. They were the best of friends afterwards of course. A little powder and shot in the flesh is very endearing in the opinion of Southern men. They are bound by ties of blood, father says, ever afterwards." And she laughed maliciously, adding, "I think I can guess the victim by your doleful face."

How her levity jarred on every nerve that day! Bertie had never seemed so detestable before, unendurable as she often was; I could have stifled her almost that night! My love for her had turned to gall momentarily.

"Be still, Bertie Lavigne!" I commanded, "if you cannot speak differently on such a subject! That noble life in jeopardy below stairs, is worth a dozen of such butterfly existences as Major Favrand's. For my part I pray that eternal justice may overtake him, if earthly fails to do so. May he suffer!" —

The curse hung suspended on my lips as it died away in my heart; for I remembered the incubus that oppressed his life already, and his wife's condition; and was half appeased; judaically!

"You ought to be more impartial, Miss Monfort!" said Bertie, speaking from the bed, in those sharp, yet suppressed accents natural to her in moments of excitement, "Captain Wentworth has no family, I heard him say so, and but little object in life. Major Favrand has a mother and sisters dependent on him, who would be left in poverty very likely were he cut off suddenly. Besides that, he is Aunt Celia's idol, and she would never survive his loss, as delicate as she is, and already affected in so many ways. I was afraid something of this kind would happen when those Northern men refused to drink father's toast; I saw Major Favrand's face then, it was not bigger than my fist and the color of a quince. His eyes were like coals of fire. That's the way rage always makes him look. No one else seemed to notice him though, or you, but you know I see everything, have nothing else to do but observe. You did not drink father's toast either, Miss Miriam Monfort! But who cares for what women do?" contemptuously. "With men it is different, they must be brought to order and made answerable. I wonder father let it pass — but he is such an easy, one-sided, inconsistent old soul, there is no accounting for anything he does. Not any more merciful though at heart than Major Favrand if the truth were known, only his wits are always out crusading." After a pause, "I thought you had gotten over that folly of yours by this time Miss Miriam. Wentworth is a mere fortune-hunter, I am sure of it. Put your foot on all care for him I entreat of you, he is not worthy of such a great soul as yours." Adding with a furtive smile, "He wanted Miss Lurlie, if you only knew it!

I saw how her diamonds fascinated him, but the Count had the whip hand there."

These bitter and impertinent words aroused me more fully than my own reflectious had done to what I owed myself in this emergency, outwardly at least.

"Bertie," I said, calmly as though I had not heard them, "get up and dress yourself as quickly as you can, and come and help me to scrape lint. Women should learn early to be efficient. Suppose you were to marry a soldier."

To my astonishment she came silently to the task, and I saw that her hands trembled as she wrought it.

Not long afterwards Bertie Lavigne acknowledged to me that the observations she had made that day were wholly baseless (as I knew them to have been), even in her own opinion; but that a wish to save me from the greater agony, had impelled her to inflict what she considered the lesser, in that strange spirit of perverseness that ruled her life — her actions, to the entire eclipsing of many noble qualities.

"I thought if I could convince you of his light-mindedness and carelessness of yourself, that you would not find his loss so bitter," she said, "but I knew very well, all the time how it was with both of you."

CHAPTER XIII.

A WEEK of great anxiety to those composing the household of Beauseincourt intervened between the "duello," of Major Favrand and Captain Wentworth, and the final opinion of Doctor Durand as to the fate of the wounded man. From my chamber immediately over the library, where lay the latter, I heard those repressed groans so suggestive of bodily agony and strength of will combined, so infinitely more heart-rending than the loudest complaints of weaker organizations.

A painful operation had to be performed and submitted to in the necessary extraction of the ball from the side which it had penetrated not far from the region of the heart, burying itself almost indiscoverably, as it seemed at first, in a mass of muscles. To aid him in this delicate and responsible operation, Doctor Durand called in the advice of a surgeon,

resident iu Savannah, who came promptly, confirmed his own judgment as to the necessities of the case, and assisted in extracting the ball ; departing as swiftly as he came, thereafter, ghost-like.

This was long before the introduction of the use of chloroform as a merciful mediator between the knife and its subjects. Captain Wentworth bore his pangs with unusual fortitude and courage. Holding the hands of Vernon for all comfort, looking steadfastly in his face from first to last and uttering but few groans while the knife and forceps torture were in process, but fainting immediately afterward.

Of all this Bertie informed me regularly, although to her communications I turned as Sphynx-like a countenance as possible and made but few rejoinders. Sylphy was amazed, I was told, at my hard-heartedness, not having suspected its existence before ; but in order to conceal and control emotion, it was necessary to petrify the surface and wear a mask of marble.

And during all this time of intense anxiety to me, my schoolroom duties went on regularly and many of my hours of leisure were passed, at her request in Madame Lavigne's now almost insupportable society, who, since her husband's departure had more than ever clung to me as a means of solace. We spoke but little by tacit consent, of the condition of the wounded man in the library, for it had been found impossible to move him from the couch on which he had at first been placed. I saw plainly, that Madame Lavigne was inclined to impute blame where it was undeserved, and little as she really liked Major Favrand to presuppose injury where none had existed.

No allusion was ever made by her, however, to the real cause of that hostile meeting which had been so nearly fatal to one party, from consideration to my feelings as a Northern partisan, no doubt.* The life of Captain Wentworth as I have said, hung on a thread until the seventh day, when a decline of fever and the appearance of more favorable symptoms in his condition, gave Doctor Durand, for the first time since the operation had been performed, a gleam of hope that his life might be spared.

To go back a little, however, in the interval of anxiety : There came a night of storms, of wind, and rain, and truly "Egyptian darkness." Doctor Durand had come and gone

* A feeling shared by all Southerners, not sectional in those days, be it remembered.

as usual during the day, proposing to return and pass the night by the now delirious patient, but he had found it impracticable to do so from the condition of the streams he had to cross. Mr. Gregory was ill himself, or feigned to be, and obliged to seek his bed, and Mr Vernon, who still maintained his post, was much worn with watching. Jura and King it is true, were always in attendance, one or the other to wait on the parties. But an intelligent assistant to the already weary watcher, was absolutely needed, and the question was, who should assume that office. One of responsibility, rather than efficiency perhaps, yet strictly essential at a crisis like the present.

I did not hesitate under the circumstances to volunteer my services, as I should have done for any human being in such need. God knows had feeling alone been in question, I would have maintained my watch from the beginning above the sick man's pillow, unremittingly, unflinchingly; but as yet in the cowardice of my conscience, I had never approached the threshold of his room, or hazarded more than a passing and careless enquiry concerning his condition. Yet his groans had rent my heart when others slept, and banished sleep from my eyes — had pursued me in memory to the distant schoolroom, and made the words before me unmeaning and vague, even as the food that passed my lips had, during this whole interval of suspense, seemed tasteless as sawdust. Thus deeply, under a calm, cold and even careless exterior, had I suffered.

It was ten o'clock at night when I entered the dimly lighted library and took my seat by the head of Captain Wentworth's bed. I had looked for a change, of course, but scarcely for so shocking an alteration as the one which even that imperfect light disclosed. His beard was long and dark and added by contrast to the cadaverous pallor of his sunken visage. His nose was drawn to a line, his lips so compressed from constant suffering that the white line around them seemed made of bone, and his eyes were full of a wild and lurid fire, as unlike their usual placid expression as the gleam of a meteor is to the steady radiance of sunshine.

> "Alas! the mother that him bare,
> Could she have been in presence there
> She had not known her child!"

I bent above him as I gazed, stirred by a sudden compassion profound and strong as motherhood itself, that swept

all conventionalities before it, and my hot tears bathed his unconscious forehead. Vernon, worn and weary as he was, and accustomed to the sight that so unnerved me, could not resist the contagion of my grief and the sound of my vainly suppressed sobbing — he too wept silently.

"He cannot sleep," he said at last in a husky whisper, "if he could do this, Doctor Durand thinks he might be saved. But opiates have ceased to affect him, except to excite. His insomnolency in itself will destroy him, unless speedily prevailed against."

Then as by some subtle association and as with a sweep of wind fingers over the harp of song, these lovely lines of Shelley from his Greek drama of Hellas, flashed irresistibly through my brain; and I murmured them involuntarily above his head.

> "I touch thy temples pale,
> I breathe my soul on thee
> And could my prayers avail
> All my joy should be
> Dead — and I would live to weep,
> So thou might'st win one hour of quiet sleep!"

Was there no spell in these words? In another moment the presence of the practical returned, and I asked only the prosaic question, so different from the inspired thought, "Did you ever try soothing him by passing your fingers lightly through his hair, or bathing his brow gently with tepid water?"

"No, we use cold water for this purpose, by direction, and I fancy that he dislikes the application very much. How I have wished," he added after a pause, "that he could be magnetized, as I once was in Russia! But for that wonderful agency I should not be keeping watch in this sorrowful room to-night! But such an assistance it is in vain to hope for in a place like this."

"Let me try my skill," I said impulsively, and I recalled what Doctor Pemberton had once theorized my own lethargic condition to be. A suffusion of the brain, caused by too much nervous fluid (not venous!) producing a coma-like condition, until absorbed again into the system. Why might I not reproduce this state of things in another, on the principle of pouring from a full vase into an empty one? Why not reverse the poles and clench the wand of magnetism so often directed against me by Nature, in my own hand? Ay, turn the tables on the Dame herself!

The electric element was stirred to its centre that night I felt, by the wild storm raging without, and ready for action. No lightning could ever strike me, Doctor Pemberton had once said laughingly; and I had believed him, already so fully charged as I was, with the counteracting fluid; for Nature who abhors a vacuum seeks only to fill up spaces. Utilitarian even in her works of destruction!

All this passed like a meteor through my mind, before the reply of Mr. Vernon had time to strike my ear. (What telegraph ever equalled the celerity of thought? What sunbeam ever surpassed its splendor?)

"Have you ever practised magnetism, Miss Harz, that you propose such experiments?" asked Mr. Vernon.

"Never!"

"Then I fear it will be a failure. There is an art about it, as well as a gift; (it is a profession in Eastern Europe you know, that of laying on of hands!) but do what you can for him in God's name, and if you succeed, command my eternal gratitude."

"You love your friend, then?" I asked in low accents.

"Love him! revere, idolize him rather!" he exclaimed, pressing his lips on the worn and flaccid hand that lay extended on the coverlet, for Doctor Durand had succeeded by degrees, in insinuating Christian bed-clothes under and around the invalid, and a white Marseilles spread now covered the couch like a snowy pall.

"He is everything to me, Miss Harz," he continued, "father, brother, mentor, even. But for him I should have been lost and destroyed long ago. I am naturally a weak man. He rescued me from great temptation once; but of that no more at present. And now that he is to leave me, perhaps, at the bidding of a selfish fire-eater, I find it hard and bitter to bear. But the end is not yet!"

His clenched teeth and locked features attested the anguish of his emotions, and some stern resolve struggling within.

"I am no coward, I trust," he pursued, "yet did no woman ever plead more humbly to her husband, her son, — her brother, in the same cause, than did I, to Wardour Wentworth to refuse this challenge. Why should his noble life have been made subject to the wanton will of a bully, tired of inaction? There was no better reason for this duel and he felt it, but he was persecuted, pressed to the wall, and

he turned like a stag at bay. As if a man like this were going to make an abject apology simply for having done his duty! You see they left him no loophole of escape. Never was persecution more persistent or pointed."

"I have suspected this from the first," I answered low; "but why did he not rise above it all; what were these men to him?"

"Alas! I vainly urged this argument. Another time I will make all plain to you. But mark! already the charm is at work; his lids are drooping, Miss Harz, yet you seem to be employing no means, save the simple threading of his hair to attain this purpose."

I bowed, for all reply. I had no explanation to offer.

"Take possession of the sofa, Mr. Vernon, and sleep if you can," I said at last," I will watch and apprise you, should he need your attention."

He obeyed me mechanically, silently. Jura was sitting, or nodding rather, on a low chair by the fire in front of a posset cup, in which some arrowroot for the sick man was kept warm on the hearth, and King lay at length on the rug, sleeping soundly, as his periodical snores attested.

I had him all to myself now. and I felt conscious of a power that night, won from such responsibility perhaps, that was beyond my own comprehension. It sustained, it uplifted, it calmed me. My thoughts had but one centre, one focus, radiate as they might; every energy, every endeavor, of nerve, brain, muscle, were bent involuntarily to one fulfilment. And it came; the words of the poet were realized. At midnight he slept, the deep, magnetic slumber. I could not be mistaken. What natural sleep was ever like to this? It was death-like in repose, yet full of evident vitality.

The breathing was deep and regular; the pulse soft and full, and a faint, warm moisture exuded from the hitherto parched and contracted skin. The lips relaxed into a gentle smile, the nostrils expanded from their rigid line and the whole countenance was transfigured into peace and calm, as though his guardian angel had brushed it with his wing.

"This is not death, but life!" I murmured triumphantly, falling in the next moment on my knees beside the bed with low words of humblest thanksgiving, praise and prayer. When I looked around again, Mr. Vernon was gazing intently on me from his sofa. I forgot self at that moment in the rapture of the reality before me. I rose and beckoned

to him to draw near. I believe at that hour my feelings approached more nearly to those of a disembodied spirit than they have ever done in the whole course of my life. Self and selfish affection were all put aside in view of the necessity of another and his welfare.

"Come and witness this miracle of God's working," I adjured him, solemnly, "Behold! he sleeps the comforting, magnetic slumber."

Something in my tone and manner, my very appearance, perhaps, standing there in my flowing white dress, pale as marble, and almost as cold and serene (as he told me later) of aspect, seemed to impress Vernon strangely. He gazed at me for a moment as if I had been a stranger.

"You seem transfigured," he said earnestly; "what is it that changes you so? And God be praised the poor storm-tossed sufferer sleeps at last. Now Heaven has heard your prayers."

We stood silently together, bending above the couch, when during one of the pauses in the storm (when silence seemed solidified in its intensity, in contrast to the peals of thunder that preceded and succeeded it), I heard a quick, distinct tapping at the door, that gave upon the gallery.

"It is only a bird seeking refuge from the tempest," said Vernon, sternly; "give it no heed; let every thought be centred here, where you are so greatly needed."

"My task is ended," I replied; "I feel this intuitively, as far as this service of slumber is concerned, at least. The servants sleep, exhausted probably; I will not disturb them, but check, myself, the intruder on the threshold — for this is no bird I feel, as you suggest, seeking shelter from the night, the doctor himself, perhaps, as I trust it may be; or probably Bertie, frightened to death, at awaking and finding herself alone; for she knew nothing of my intention of watching."

"Let me go then, Miss Harz."

But I checked him instantly.

"No, no; I prefer to encounter Bertie myself, for I feel convinced it is she, and she must not be admitted, nor yet terrified. She is too impressible to be brought in contact with illness."

Yet with a strange unwillingness, for which I could scarcely account, a morbid dread even of what it might re-

veal, I unclosed the door, in answer to the repeated summons. A quick faint tapping, rather than a decided knock, such as Poe's raven might have been supposed to have made on a memorable occasion, was again heard.

"Pray heaven it waken him not," I murmured, as I turned the knob and opened the door ajar, anxious to avert further risk of disturbance to the sleeper. A man wearing a slouched hat, pulled low over his face and dripping with rain, wrapped too, in a wet cloak that clung closely about him, while he held in his hand the riding-whip, with which he had rapped lightly for admission, stood on the threshold. It was not until he spoke that I recognized Major Favrand.

"How is he to-night?" he asked, in a husky whisper; "I could not trust to the report of servants, so came myself. Yet I assure you it *rains!*" shrugging his shoulders in his peculiar way. "Ah! is it you, Miss Harz?" taking off hat and glove and extending his hand now, of which I took no notice, "I thought Doctor Durand had the watch!"

"I cannot tell you how he is," I replied, "with any certainty," still holding the door in my hand; "it would take a physician to decide that, nor can I comprehend, I acknowledge, why *you* of all persons, should care to know!"

"You are severe, Miss Harz," he said, in a low voice. "Grant me at least, the possession of human feelings, if no more. When the requisitions of honor are satisfied, other considerations succeed in the breast of every man worthy of the name. I myself have been wounded in the duello, without resenting it one particle. I never regretted anything in my life as much as the necessity for this affair, I assure you."

"Necessity!" I sneered, "you choose your words inaptly, it seems to me, for a man of erudition. Were you to say iniquity, I should understand you."

"Iniquity, then, if you will have it so; anything for peace and penance. I would like to jump down into a burning crater to-night, just to get rid of myself. I am so supremely wretched;" raising his hand to his forehead, "but you do not give me any satisfaction."

"No, I have none to give you. If your own safety is your object, and it surely is endangered, if there is any justice in this land, you had better fly at once probably. It does no one any good to have you shivering at the door, and beyond it you shall not come with my consent. Shall

I arouse King or Jura to get you fire and brandy elsewhere? Those are your necessities, I suppose. There is no *crater* convenient I believe, and warmth is your idea just now, probably."

"Ay warmth! heart-warmth, compassion, sympathy, not chilling scorn like yours!"

"Go elsewhere then and seek it, Major Favrand," I answered, "for I have none to give you," drawing back. "The hall door is unlocked, the dining room fire still smoulders; I will send you an attendant in a few moments. Go, if you really want to know the result of your despotic and cruel act, and watch by that glimmering hearth with what feelings you may. Watch and pray until morning if you ever do such things. Doctor Durand will by that time have arrived, and nature declared her intentions. At present all is uncertainty."

I closed the door softly without awaiting his reply, and dispatched Jura to his aid as I had promised to do, who found him in the dining-room, stalking up and down, an object of compassion in the old servant's eyes, if not in mine, an exercise which he continued uninterruptedly until morning.

When I returned to the bed-side, I found Vernon, who sat absorbed in watching the slumberer.

"Yes, I do believe he sleeps through your agency," he said, "will you test it Miss Harz?"

"How shall I do this?"

"Speak to him and he will answer you."

"I would not disturb him for worlds, Mr. Vernon, his sleep is life-giving perhaps."

"But you will not do that, in any case! Speak in a whisper if you will, and if this is a natural sleep, he will not hear you. If a magnetic one, he will reply. One question, only one! murmur it inaudibly if you prefer it; it will be all the same. The experiment will be perfect."

So, adjured and convinced of the reasonable nature of this demand, I murmured low above his head, but not inaudibly to Vernon, an earnest interrogatory: "Have you forgiven Major Favrand?"

"I have forgiven him and all others so offending," was the muttered reply, spoken after a short interval, with an immovable aspect, and as if some foreign voice found egress from lips of stone that scarcely seemed to move, while the deep sleep continued undisturbed.

"Do you wish to see him in order to tell him this?" I whispered, impulsively and before I could control inclination; dreading an unintelligible reply this time I confess.

"No, never more. I will never see him again, if I can help it. Let Vernon tell him all," murmured the mechanical lips.

"It is beyond a doubt," said Vernon, deeply moved; "your influence controls him; your will alone can awaken him! God grant his holy calm to such awakening."

"Amen!" was my deep-voiced response, reacting from heart to mouth. Yet again in the depths of my own spirit another murmur of involuntary inquiry which never passed my lips, went out to the unconscious sleeper. Vernon was scarcely more startled than I was, when the distinct reply was heard to this inaudible appeal. A reply as thrilling and welcome to me, as it was incomprehensible to him!

"Yes, with all my soul!" and this was all. Again deep silence fell upon the scene. The oracle was mute.

"Thank God for this, at least, come weal, come woe!" I murmured, and for a moment I felt the burning torrent, unperceived by my companion in that shadowed place, suffuse my face, my throat, as it would have done in the privacy of my own chamber, then die away again like a retreating wave.

"What can these words apply to?" mused Vernon, softly. "A continuance of that sublime assurance of forgiveness under flagrant circumstances I suppose. How wonderful, how mysterious is the influence of soul upon soul! What a medical agent it might be made, putting aside any other uses! By the by, Miss Harz, was that Favrand's voice I heard at the door, or have I been dreaming? No, do not fear that my words can wake him now. I was absent minded at the time not to have anticipated your movement to open it, though you forbade me. Once you were there, I did not care to interrupt you, however, or to follow."

"Yes, it was he. Very penitent and wretched it appears! Anxious to know the truth as to Captain Wentworth's condition."

"What an unaccountable farce!" he spoke with bitter derision; "he reminds me of a woman I once read of in the 'Causes Celèbres' who gave poisons merely for the pleasure of weeping over her victims, whom she attended in their death throes with the greatest assiduity, unsuspected for

a long time as their author. How is he much better than she was?"

I was silent, and it may be that he misapprehended my silence, for he continued, —

"You are still dubious, of course. Some day I will show you the correspondence, and I think your sense of right will then bear out my assertions. It was, from first to last, insolent and overbearing, such as no gentleman could brook, — and yet Captain Wentworth fired in the air, you know," adding, between his set teeth, "I shall not do this, however!"

"I had not heard," I replied. "No details have been afforded me."

"Very Quixotic to those who do not know the man as I do, this act appears, no doubt! But it was a perfectly natural one, taken in connection with his peculiar views. Of all persons I have ever known, he is the most tenacious of being in the right, whatever may betide, for his own sake as well as the sacred cause of principle. He could not avoid this meeting and continue here, he thought, where his work lies for the present, in the face of the bitter and oppressive usages of the land. His life must have been, sooner or later, the sacrifice had he done so, he conceived, for cowardice would have been imputed to him by the undiscriminating, and he would have been assailed at every point. So, for the sake of future peace, finding reason unavailing, he chose to accept the challenge of Major Favrand, without a feeling about the matter stronger than disgust, — and venture life for ultimate safety. This was his view, not mine. He told me the evening before the duel what he intended to do. They fired simultaneously. Major Favrand with deadly intent, no doubt, — Captain Wentworth in the air. This is what galls the Southerner! Hot coals have been heaped on his head for the first time by an antagonist. But not through regard for him, let him rest assured, if the thought consoles him. Captain Wentworth looked beyond him in forbearing — beyond time."

"He is truly a noble Christian," I said, quietly. I could not trust myself to eulogize, where I already felt so deeply.

"Ah, if you did but know *all*, Miss Harz!" and his soft, fair features, even in that subdued light, glowed with enthusiasm. "You, who are but a stranger, cannot be expected to feel as I do; but I would like to have him appreciated to the full, if possible, by such a mind as yours."

"Should I know him long enough," I faltered, "I shall meet you in full sympathy, no doubt. Now, all is uncertain, — his life even."

"Yes, yes, I forget. I am too sanguine, perhaps. But I must believe his life will be spared. I could not give him up. Not now, not now, at least! God grant our prayers! Yet, if not granted, God grant me my revenge!" And he wrung his hands in an anguish that was almost feminine in its outspoken fervor. Yet, his purpose was a manly one.

It was now for the first time that I understood him. This was on the sixth night. When Doctor Durand came at daybreak, he saw remote cause for hope, though his patient still lay bound in that strange, surpassing slumber, — the chains of which were unloosed by the lifting of a distant hand, the whispering of a will, before he came again at evening.

At my request Vernon had not spoken of my participation, real or imagined, in this refreshing lethargy of soul and sense.

I disliked, inexpressibly, the idea of the sort of small notoriety, and fanciful discussion such knowledge might give rise to, and bring about, and preferred that nature and his truly good and skilful physician should share the credit of the patient's restoration to the arms of sleep.

I was, I knew, but a tool in the hands of the all-pitying Mother, the merciful Father. But sweet it is to render service, even if secretly and involuntarily, to those we love and reverence.

"You are the best nurse we have had yet, Miss Harz," said Doctor Durand, as he wrung my hand when we met casually, on the gallery near Madame Lavigne's chamber, on the evening in question. "I saw your faculty for the executive department of medicine displayed when Bertie was sick; and now it seems you are doing wonders for our wounded Yankee. As his physician I must thank you. 'Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep,' you know, and all that sort of thing. The fact is, the old fellow that said that knew what he was talking about. There is nothing like it when natural, and not drug induced, in the whole Pharmacopœia as a simple recuperative. Quite sensible too, this evening; quite 'himself again,' as Robert, or Richard, or whatever his name may be, said in the play. Eye mild pulse soft — voice low, but natural, — the instrument gradually coming into tune, I think. Have you seen him today, Miss Harz?" fixing his quick, deep eye on me.

"No, not since breakfast time. My watch terminated then, and I gave holiday and slept all the forenoon. This afternoon I have been taking advantage of the first glimpse of sunshine to breathe a little fresh air. Oh, I wish I were the clerk of the weather, or his wife, Doctor Durand! it should never rain for more than an hour or two at a time, and I would banish veils from the face of the heavens entirely, and let the sun go barefaced, in the present city fashion for beauties. But unfortunately I have not the honor of such acquaintance even, or of being included in family consultations." I was talking nonsense for diversion, now.

"Never mind, I will make it up to you. I will call you in as my consulting oracle, whenever there is question of soothing an irritable patient, or coaxing him or her to sleep. Now, could not you be induced to take charge of poor Wentworth again to-night? The crisis is very important, for such it is, I suppose; as a case, — a mere case, I am deeply interested, I confess; but I pity poor Favrand almost as much."

"Pity him! why? How does he excite your pity? I confess I enjoy his torments."

"Oh, Miss Harz!"

"I do, indeed, Doctor Durand. The arbitrary, overbearing aggressor! If I had been a man I should never have fired in the air, as his adversary did, I assure you, sir. Nothing short of a limp for life would have contented me."

"You fierce, blood-thirsty, puritanic girl! Your eyes are actually blazing! I never saw you look so well, by the by, as at this moment. Remember the old adage though, my dear young lady, and be just! When you are in Turkey, you must do as the turkies do, — gobble, or be gobbled up! a case in point. Favrand is a South Carolinian, idolizing the modern Washington of his State, and his policy, and can ill brook the slightest disrespect with regard to him. It was a matter of State pride with him, as much as personal affection. Wentworth had only to retract, and be forgiven. I saw the correspondence; it was magnanimous on *one* side. But this he positively refused to do. Nay, more; when pressed for his opinion, he gave it frankly and daringly enough. Just think of his calling our great man a selfish traitor! Well, after that, what occurred was a natural consequence. All right, of course. No one could blame Favrand any longer. But the greatest insult, and most 'un-

kindest cut of all,' it seems to me, was that firing in the air. What possessed the man? It was bitterly contemptuous conduct certainly."

"I am glad you consider it such, and, moreover, truly hope that Major Favrand shares your opinion. I thought until I came here, that the free utterance of sentiment was an unalienable right appertaining to every American citizen; that public men, were public property, liable to be discussed, disapproved of, or eulogized, as suited the tastes or interests of the speaker; and that no man was made answerable to another for the opinions or arrows he chose to launch at those targets, for popular feeling. I am enlightened, Doctor Durand! I find myself unexpectedly in the Chinese empire, with its mandarins of many orders as its directors and despots. Small thanks for courtesy that has no deeper foundation than coincidence of expression! Small gratitude for privilege to eat and drink and move in physical freedom, as a condition of the bondage of the soul. I too refused to give that pledge without intending to offend or dreaming of observation. I justify Captain Wentworth!"

"My dear, dear girl! help me to cure him, and I don't care what you think or do afterwards. You may even marry him if you choose — or Vernon, or Gregory — and help carry chain, cook, wash and manage for the trio — bitter as would be my disappointment in this case, and deep your own humiliation — so that you get the man on his feet again. But don't talk this way to any one else, I beg of you; Madame Favrand has been nearly crazy about this affair. It came very near killing her. I am going there now to see and comfort her, if I can. Have you no consideration for her? that poor, excellent, suffering lady."

"The greatest, the very greatest. Tell her so, if you please; that is, if you think she would care to hear it, coming from such a source. But for him, the heartless, fire-eating bully, nothing, nothing of the kind, either now or hereafter. I scorn and detest him inexpressibly." And I folded my arms tightly.

"Shall I tell him so, Miss Harz?" archly, as he shook my hand in parting, for I could not refuse him that courtesy.

"Just as you please, Doctor Durand. He knows my sentiments perfectly, from my own lips, already, I believe, and, as you may suppose, regards them very profoundly. When do you come again?"

"To-morrow. Say, do you take the watch to-night? If so I shall still hope for amendment. Answer me now; will you be so obliging — no or yes?"

"Oh, certainly. It is simply a Christian duty. I would do as much as that, even for Major Favrand himself, perhaps, at extremity. But I really fear you are inclined to over-rate my efficiency."

"Results show for themselves. You will give him those drops on the mantelpiece according to directions on the bottle, should he be sleepless, not otherwise. What did you administer last night?"

"Nothing; I had no directions from you, remember," I said.

"True, true; it is very surprising, though, that the change should have occurred so suddenly," walking away with his hands in his pockets, his head down, thinking hard, evidently, to puzzle out the mystery.

"Miss Harz," returning briskly on his steps just before I reached the stairway, and plucking me fiercely by the sleeve.

I paused of course, and looked back like the indiscreet Eurydice, or the brothers of the Princess Parazade, or Lot's saline wife, on hearing my own name, but with a different fate I acknowledge.

"It has just occurred to me," looking up confidently by this time, and with a very beaming expression of discovery, "that it is barely possible that you are unconsciously magnetic. Have you ever meddled with this new-fangled theory set to practice, that is agitating all you Northerners just now, after convulsing Europe in vain, called 'mesmerism,' before you came to Beauseincourt? Now tell me truly; I ask for the sake of science."

"Never, Doctor Durand, before I came to Beauseincourt, I assure you."

"Well, well! it is most extraordinary. I see no good reason for that sudden cessation of fever and delirium superinducing sleep so profound as to have been evidently a premature crisis. I thought it would be several days yet before that would take place, and was wondering how poor, exhausted, suffering nature would bear the strain so long. For opiates such as I cared to administer, had lost all soothing effect, and to give large doses was, it seemed to me, to endanger enfeebled life. The doctor is detained by

raging creeks and storm, and the patient prospers in his absence as he might not have done in his presence! A little witch glides in with some magic philter, contained in her eyes, perhaps, and the son of Galen is put to shame. Reveal your art, Miriam Harz, or stand indicted for trial the next session of wizards. Come, sister physician, tell me this mystery, I entreat of you," coaxingly, "your country people have burned fair women as witches for smaller causes you know. See, I menace as well."

"'Doctor, doctor, cease your strife
Nor longer idly rave, sir,
As I'm *not* your wedded wife
I am not your slave, sir.'

"Nor would all the wheedling you are master of, make you master of my secret. How do you know, by the way, that a crumb of that Calhoun Cake may not be at the bottom of the whole proceeding? 'The hair of the dog is good for the bite,' and *Hahneman* works magical cures on that principle."

"So you are a mere charlatan after all! A sugar-plum quackess, going about with little globules in your pocket."

"Half the world is cured with sugar-plums, you know. Nothing like kindness, doctor."

"One thing is certain; 'not poppy nor mandragora, nor all the drowsy syrups in the world, could ever minister to such sweet sleep,' as thou, Miriam Harz, did'st, in some mysterious and nefarious way, manage to induce last night, on a certain wakeful, weary, wounded Yankee's eyelids!"

"Doctor, there is another version of that matter perhaps, which you have not seen fit to take. Now I fancy Captain Wentworth is one of the elect, in whom you believe according to the precepts of your charitable church. Those are sweet words and comforting to some spirits, but to deserve them is a rare privilege, believe me. 'God giveth his belovèd sleep.'"

And so we parted, neither of us convinced, nor yet very likely to be so.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MONTH elapsed before Colonel Lavigne came home, and when he did so, he was wretchedly wan and worn. To judge from appearances, he had been engaged in a wrestle of some sort, little less disastrous, (if of a different nature) than that, death had so recently waged with life, in the system of Captain Wentworth.

I happened to be present at the first interview between the master of Beauseincourt and his guest, after the return of the former. At the request of the invalid, I had been reading "Hyperion" aloud that morning in his chamber, assisted by Bertie, who flew in and out, as she listed. Marion and Madge had done their part bravely in these readings; and now entreated respite; for until that day I had not bestowed my services on the entertainment of one from whom I sedulously sought to conceal the interest he had awakened in my breast.

Never had my voice sounded to my own ear, so cold, so monotonous, so little musical as on this occasion, and I fancied that my own want of spirit was communicating itself rapidly to my auditor, when the door opened and much to my relief, as quite unexpectedly, Colonel Lavigne stalked in.

The ceremonious greeting over (for a strange coldness had crept between the head of the house and myself of late, and towards his Northern guests he had always been strictly punctilious and courteous), a silence ensued, through which, though with evident effort, Captain Wentworth was the first to break.

"You find me in complete possession of your den, Colonel Lavigne," he said, smiling wanly.

"Yes, and with all the bones lying loose about," was the rejoinder, glancing with the partial eye of a master as he spoke, at the sundry uncouth and rusty looking weapons, that graced the walls; and at the long array of meerschaums above the mantelpiece.

"Nothing has been disturbed I believe, so far," observed Captain Wentworth, following the complacent eye of his host with an amused expression, "but as I grow stronger, I may become meddlesome, so be warned in time, and if uneasy about their safety, remove your deposits at once, Jackson-like."

"No, no; I only hope you may find comfort in some of these trophies. There are pipes there that might satisfy a pacha of three tails. And as you are able to creep about a little by this time, you would be the better of a whiff now and then. Sir Walter Raleigh, you remember, relieved his imprisonment in that way."

"I seldom smoke, even when in health, and then only a good cigar. A pipe is too business-like, too engrossing for a busy man like me. Just now the draught of tobacco too on my energies would be prodigious. It takes all I have to keep me from falling back again. I think I shall enjoy the perusal of your quaint copy of King James's counterblast about this time."

"You have been seriously ill, I know. I regret the cause as much as any one could. Favrand is entirely too Quixotic."

"I am glad to hear you admit this, Colonel Lavigne," earnestly, "it has not been one of the least painful circumstances connected with my helpless condition that I have been necessarily indebted for hospitable kindness to those who might be supposed to have been represented by Major Favrand's act. Your disclaimer is a great relief to my mind."

'Sir, as my guest, and above all as my son's friend, you must have been exempt under any circumstances, from ordinary penalties," said Colonel Lavigne, loftily.

"Noblesse oblige," I heard Bertie murmur in a low tone. She had gone out for a moment to meet, after a whisper from Sip, and had returned with, her father, but her face was solemnly sympathetic with him now, not at all derisive. The child, with all her anti-Huguenotish professions, was truly clannish, and a partisan to her heart's core.

"But where," said Colonel Lavigne, digressing very wisely (before he could have received a reply which might have embarrassed him) from the subject of discussion, "where are your young friends, Gregory, Yorke, and Vernon? Have they abandoned you to the care of the Philis-

tines? I do not see them about, and I had hoped that all of you, under such circumstances, would remain together."

"They are out on surveys," was the careless answer, "that I ought personally to be superintending. Camping with Patrick, their pillar of household strength (for he serves them as cook, laundress, and purveyor, and what is technically called, bottle-washer), somewhere on the skirts of your 'Lesdernier' settlement. At the edge of the swamp, I believe."

"Rather a disagreeable location at this season, they will find it, I apprehend. Strangely enough my son's salubrious little nest in the hills, overhangs this truly dismal swamp; and from its lofty site the eye embraces the great, sombre, cypress-grown marsh beneath, with its dismal lake and occasional revelations of black, shining pools and reed patches, for an extent of more than twenty miles. By the way, why don't they fit up the Refuge for their abode?"

"Without my knowledge or coincidence, but with Doctor Durand's advice, this has already been done, I believe, Colonel Lavigne. They meant to take me there, in case of a wound, when the fight occurred, but the crisis seemed too imminent, and the risk too great at the moment, so, at least, the physician thought, and consequently they brought me, in a state of unconsciousness, hither. In a few days, however, I hope to be able to take possession of Walter's cottage, with your permission, until I am my own man again. In the meantime I can peep down occasionally on the swamp encampment, and encourage the boys. Yorke, especially, is but a green recruit. My own idea about the result of the duel was, that I should escape untouched, or be killed, one or the other. So that I thought very little about providing a hospital or retreat for myself."

"You overrated Major Favrand's skill and humanity both, it seems," with a grim smile.

"The last, not the first, probably," was Captain Wentworth's stern rejoinder. "I suppose he did what he meant to do. I give him credit, at least, for accuracy and discrimination as a marksman."

"You will meet and shake hands soon, over a joram of punch or claret, I hope, and all will be forgotten. It is our Southern way," hazarded Colonel Lavigne, carelessly.

"Not mine, however," rejoined Captain Wentworth, coldly. "Yet I too, claim to be a Southerner, for I am a Virginian."

Here Bertie whispered to me, —

"I like him for that. He is unforgiving. I would not give a cent for one of your mealy-mouthed making-up sort of milksop men. He is a real Jew."

"He is not unforgiving," I said. "No there are other considerations. But be still, Bertie, this is surely no affair of ours."

"Let us go then," she said, "since we have no business here."

"Presently; I have still a page or two unfinished; I do not wish to return."

And when Colonel Lavigne had withdrawn, I calmly concluded my chapter. I rose then to say good-morning.

"Miss Harz, ten minutes more," he plead, with upraised hand.

"Certainly, Captain Wentworth;" sitting down again quietly.

"That poem you gave me, according to promise; interpret it yourself this morning."

"Is it so incomprehensible then? I told you it was an allegory.

"No, surely not. But I mean simply, interpret it through the medium of your voice. I have an earnest desire to hear you read it. It would impress me more."

"I shall succeed very badly, I fear, in recommending it to you by this method. Indeed, I am not in voice to-day."

"To-morrow, then."

"No, to-day rather. I cannot come back to-morrow."

"She will not," said Bertie: "she can if she likes, but she does not fancy sick people, nor their cavern-like chambers, so still, so smothering; that is the truth, Captain Wentworth, the cave of Trophonius, you know."

He smiled incredulously, and shook his head.

"No, she has some better reason than that, I fear, Bertie. Some less general reason; however, I submit, and embrace the alternative — the poem now, or never, perhaps."

And he drew it from his portfolio on the table, near which he was sitting in a great cushioned chair covered with white dimity, that had been Colonel Lavigne's mother's sick chair of state and was still supposed to be imbued with healing properties for the invalid.

"Here, Sip, take this to Miss Harz;" and the small sable valet pro-tem. instantly darted forth with his tiny silver salver, as instructed to do by Jura whenever called upon to act the part of Mercury.

"Now do your best," said Bertie, pertly, as I took the poem given away so carelessly a month before, so much regretted now that I had dropped the plummet down into my own heart and sounded its depths.

"You must have patience with my tame reading then, if you will have me read it," I said deprecatingly, "everything I write seems so flat after the effervescence is over. And this, as I told you, I believe, was written long ago, and merely came up in relation to our discussion about 'memory.'"

"I remember, and the conditions you annexed as well. Neither praise nor censure admitted. Too proud for criticism, Miss Harz."

"Too humble, probably if the truth were known," I replied, "but to prove this, I revoke one part of my prohibition. You may censure as much as you please, it is eulogium only that I sternly prohibit, mere matter of course as it would be on such an occasion."

"What if I were to assure you," he began eagerly —

"Nay, listen rather," I interrupted; "time is passing; 'ten minutes' glide very swiftly away, Captain Wentworth. It was for these you stipulated I think," and I began.

There was some asperity in my tone or manner probably, that struck him painfully, for I felt that his grave interrogative eyes were fixed on me sadly, though my own were cast down on the page before me. I read mechanically, for between me and the words beneath, floated his serious and noble countenance, wan, yet clear, his languid, yet stately form robed in its purple, fur-trimmed dressing-gown, (a relic of polar latitudes,) reclining in its intense repose and attention both, in the deep invalid chair in the corner; the fine statuesqe head cast back, the long, nervous hands folded, the steady, speaking gaze directed to my features. I was truly glad when the ordeal was ended and I found myself at liberty to depart. The simple, yet emphatic "Thank you," of the patient, being the only words that broke the silence afterwards.

I laid the manuscript once more before him, containing the poem of the "Golden Lyre," bowed, without lifting my eyes to his, and left him coldly, followed by Bertie.

I lay my poem before the reader in that spirit of confidence which has so far influenced me toward him; giving him permission to read it, skim it, or ignore it altogether, as suits his pleasure or convenience.

To present such alternatives at all might seem a work of supererogation, were it not for the honorable understanding supposed to exist between author and reader, — when of equal culture, — the unspoken contract that for the time enlists the mind that receives in the interests of the brain that creates and makes them one.

Without further preamble then, I strike my "Golden Lyre."

THE GOLDEN LYRE.

Give me the golden lyre again
  I cast aside in earlier years,
And I will wake another strain,
  Though dim the chords with tears.

Give me my lyre — I loved it well
  When on the shores of life I stood,
And made those earnest numbers swell
  That stirred the solitude.

I sang of Love, I sang of Fame,
  I sang of Hope, the young, the fair,
And at my call those visions came,
  Those glorious shapes of air:

And stretching forth their godlike hands
  Above the wide and gleaming main,
They wooed me from those yellow sands
  I never sought again.

Upon those shores I flung my lyre,
  Impatient of its golden weight,
And, linked with that immortal choir,
  I dared the tide of fate.

Then felt the waves a spell of power,
  Then heard the heavens a solemn chant,
Such as have seldom since that hour
  Made silence jubilant.

Borne upward by those glancing wings,
  Across the weltering waves I flew,
Nor heeded those low mutterings
  That stirred the waters blue.

Nor feared the rising of the gale,
  The surging of the billow's crest,
Nor shrank to hear the eagle's wail
  Above the water's breast.

I knew not in my buoyant youth
What dark, portentous signs were these;
To souls, unskilled in wrong and ruth
Omens are mysteries.

But when the evening shed her gloom
Across the wild and warring tide,
I felt each frail and shadowy plume
Relaxing, leave my side.

And in the dark and starless night,
When winds and waves together strove,
They left me to the tempest's might,
All left me, — even Love.

Morn came, — a bleak and dreary morn,
And found me on a sterile strand,
All feeble, tempest-tost and worn,
Lone in a stranger land.

Cast like the sea-weed from the brine,
Wrapped in a vague despair I lay,
And the dark dreams that then were mine
Can never pass away.

But soon the Godhead in my breast
Woke 'neath the cold, clear eye of dawn,
And at my soul's supreme behest
I rose and journeyed on.

And turning inward from the main,
I found a valley, lone and deep,
Wherein to make my home of pain,
Wherein to wait and weep.

There, mourning o'er my faith betrayed,
My prospects crushed, my hopes undone,
I dwelt unheeded, in the shade,
By all things — all, save *one*.

A haunting shape had made its cell
Within that "valley of the past,"
And I have learned to love it well
That dearest friend, and last.

That low, sweet voice hath reached my heart
Through years of unreverting care,
And yielding to its angel art
I turn to days that were.

Those vanished dreams surround me now,
I crave once more my golden lyre,
Oh! stranger of the glorious brow,
The eye and lip of fire,

Go to those bright eternal sands
Bathed by the waves of Life's wide sea,
And seek the harp my careless hands
Cast down in ecstasy.

Enchanted by that touch of thine,
Oh, dweller of angelic spheres,
'Twill utter still a strain divine,
Though dim the chords with tears!

And we will praise thee, holy Truth,
The spirit "Memory" and I,
Until the visions of my youth
Return no more to die.

I received that evening a note in an unfamiliar hand. The writing betrayed the feebleness of the writer, uncertain as it was, yet it was a clear, compact calligraphy no doubt at its best, and possessed strange power to move me. From the first I suspected its authorship, when Sip stood beside me, with his little outstretched tray, on which a sealed letter was lying. I took it mechanically, and held it long with the seal unbroken.

"Is dere any answer, Miss Mirime?" asked Sip, twitching his forelock as he bowed with one foot elevated behind him.

"None that I know of. You may go now, Sip."

And slowly, and sadly, and not without blinding tears, I read the contents of Captain Wentworth's note, simple as it was, and thus it ran:

"Miss Harz:—

"You came to me unwillingly, I fear, this morning, as you left me coldly, and the consequence is, I am wretched. I will not, dare not accuse you of inconsistency, perfect as your whole conduct of life has seemed to me; and I am forced, however unwillingly, to the mortifying conclusion that I have unwittingly offended you. If this indeed be the case, give me, I implore you, an opportunity of reinstating myself in your esteem, by explaining to me frankly, the cause of your coldness, your indifference of late.

In this melancholy struggle of mine between life and death, I have been made sensible of my debt of gratitude to you for kind and merciful attentions, such as a sister might have rendered to a suffering brother. Your three nights' vigil, held partly by a bed of delirium, are engraven on my heart by every law of gratitude and honor; and I should be wanting in manhood were I to suffer a cloud to rise between us now, without making an effort to dissipate it. Condescend then, I implore you, to set forth to me my offence or short-coming, if such exist at all, and relieve me of a burden that I feel almost too great to bear.

"Should there be nothing of this sort, however, and should your change of manner arise from caprice of mood alone, or from the shadow of some sorrow which you prefer to conceal, forgive me, I beg, for the intrusion of this enquiry, and try and forget that I have ever doubted you or myself.

"We are strangers in a strange land, and bound together in some sort, by such indirect affinity. Should you need such service as I can render, do not hesitate to claim it, not alone as a meed of gratitude, but as a tribute of esteem. It troubles me to see a shadow on your bright, ingenuous countenance, which to me, has been as a rose blooming in the desert to travellers in Eastern lands, in this dreary and monotonous region, where your voice, your smile, alone have cheered my existence, and I would fain lift it away.

"Forgive this long, rambling note — which I dread to look over because too feeble to rewrite — and reply to it, I pray you, in that spirit of candour and benevolence that usually actuates you. In the meantime rest assured of the respectful devotion of

WARDOUR WENTWORTH."

What woman is there who has not proved the luxury of bolt, and bar, and solitude, when there was question of perusing the characters traced by a prized and cherished hand? What mortal eye could be other than intrusive in such communion of soul with soul, and what rapture exceeds that of entire absorption of thought and being in the peculiar characters of one we love? To pore over a letter, line by line, word by word; to bathe it with tears or embalm it with kisses; to lay it against brow and heart, as though it bore a talisman to calm the one and nerve the

other; and finally to lock it away where no eye nor hand can ever reach it, save one's own! Are not these privileges dear to every breast of feeling or refinement? Who can, who *ought* to share such emotions with another?

And thus I felt at first when reading and re-reading that impulsive, yet measured letter. Warm on the surface, cold at the heart, whose true meaning broke on me suddenly at last. A duty performed, no more! tribute rendered to self-respect, not affection — to courtesy, not devotion. A knightly note, such as a true gentleman was bound to write in order to set himself in the right position with one who misconceived him, perhaps, (and this thought sent the blood in burning torrents to my brow,) to a woman piqued, evidently, that he had assigned limits to an intercourse she had found too pleasant to surrender without a struggle, a sort of friendly finale! I covered my face with my hands.

An hour later I sent by Bertie an answer to the letter I had read so rapturously at first, so sadly and indignantly later. For in this order, to my understanding, had the latent and underlying intention struggled up to the surface, as a corpse rises, after a season, upon the water. But he should never see that I had understood him, never! Like himself I would affect simplicity, candour, indifference. And so I wrote:

"Captain Wentworth: —

"I regret that physical depression should have influenced my manner this morning. Believe me, my regard for you is entirely unchanged, and you attach too much consequence to a feminine privilege especially dear to me, that of variety of mood.

"As to the services you are good enough to hinge much gratitude upon, they were mere Christian duties, to which I hope you will never recur again, even mentally. I wish it were in my power to do as much for every sufferer. Your very kind and gentlemanly offers of aid and assistance I shall hold in abeyance, trusting, however, that we may both pass safely through the trials that surround us in this land of strangers, without farther difficulty or need of one another. With sincere wishes for your speedy recovery, I remain, very truly your friend,

Miriam Harz."

I sent this insincere and unworthy note, with a feeling of petty self-gratulation for which I despised myself later as years after I drew forth his letter and read it with different eyes. Pride and vanity ruled me in this proceeding; but the past rose up before me at the time, with all its fatal memories of betrayal of trust reposed and mockery of affection. Never again — oh, never again should the rôle of Claude Bainrothe be enacted with my consent and as far as I was concerned. No! better oblivion — solitude — despair forever!

I find this entry in my journal of that date betraying the same spirit:

"The old wound smarts to-night. I must guard the cicatrix carefully, lest it bleed again. I must avoid that fatal influence. I have been rash to trust myself within its sphere so completely, so confidingly. God help me in my struggle! My feelings are dyspeptic; they cannot digest rich aliment. I must entertain them with hermit's fare — they are not strong enough to withstand another shock. I must close the doors of my fortress, and bolt and bar them silently, and so keep out intruders. It is not so easy to eject an inmate as to prevent his entrance. Guns pointed without tell only on outsiders. He who gains admission is safe — ay, master of all within the citadel. Let me cleave to my purpose and turn aside for no man. I have vowed to put my enemy under foot, be it at the peril of my own life. What have I to do with softer passions than justice and revenge? Let me not forget that the blood of Esther flows in my veins and that the scaffold is not yet builded for Haman! While Basil Bainrothe holds one hair of my head I am unsafe, as Luther said of Satan. A few months more and then my years will make me his equal in the strife. The names of ward and guardian will have no force nor meaning, and armed with the majesty of the offended law I will confront him. My sister, my remnant of estate, my bayou-gashed gold lands, so providentially and marvellously revealed to me, all will be in the hollow of my hand again, and woe betide the fraudulent conspirator. As for Evelyn, with her I will deal accordingly as she has dealt with Mabel and my old servants, — mercifully if they have fared well, vengefully, if through her they have suffered — justly I hope, with God's permission, in any case."

No more of this. And yet it may be conceived how

much comfort I found in this old black book of mine, with its silver clasps, its fair and friendly bosom on which to repose otherwise unspoken confidence; and if I smile over many of those records now, there are others blistered with recent tears, though of ancient inditing. Doctor Johnson knew the cravings of the human heart when he recommended Mrs. Thrale to keep a diary as a safeguard against desolation. I forget the stately words wherein he clothed his counsel.

CHAPTER XV.

TWO weeks had elapsed before I saw him again; weary and wearing weeks to me of monotony and gloom. Others went and came to and from that solemn chamber, where sat a man who never smiled they told me, — sad and grave as if age had suddenly stolen upon him and made him captive. I alone crossed not its threshold, sent and received no message, a voluntary exile from a presence, which, under more favorable auspices it would have given me such joy to seek, but which could only wither and depress me now. I was acting on the defensive; my peace, my reason were at stake, and I must guard them as I would my life. Oh, fatal, fatal passion! how hadst thou stolen upon me in the rebound of feeling and in my unsuspecting fallacy of strength, and fettered me hand and foot, as Samson was bound, while securely slumbering. But I would break these bonds — break them, even as Samson did, like withes of flax and rise up again, albeit in my blindness, to draw down ruin upon my head. For life, and the very aspects of nature were changed to me of late, as if indeed a cloud had obscured my vision; and again the gladness and glory had departed from Beauseincourt.

"I don't wonder you never go near Captain Wentworth now, Miss Miriam," said Madge one day, "he has grown so stupid. I never saw bodily ailment depress a man so

greatly; he is altogether changed; I had begun to think him very agreeable."

"He is doing penance, perhaps, for having fired in the air;" I suggested, carelessly.

"Or lamenting over his boot that Mr. Duganne cut to pieces to draw off with less pain to his wound on the day of the 'Duello.' Yankees are so stingy, you know," sneered Bertie.

"But he is not a Yankee at all," said Marion, earnestly, "a real Virginian instead, like Mr. Gregory, and like him too, with ancient English blood in his veins;" and she glanced at me for confirmation. But I was resolutely silent.

"Vernon is a Yankee anyhow," said Bertie, tauntingly, "he has a real cod-fish look."

She could be very coarse sometimes, we know.

"Oh, Bertie!" and the eloquent blood in Marion's cheek remonstrated beyond her words against such rudeness and injustice, and betrayed her vivid interest in the young "Esquimaux," as Madame Lavigne and Bertie called and considered him.

"'Oh, Bertie!' what? He is better-looking than Gregory, anyhow. I am afraid of that man! He has the step of a catamount, and is bearded like a Pard, as the old Parrot says somewhere of somebody."

"Bertie Lavigne, you are too pert and derisive," quoth Madge, turning sharply upon her sister and manifesting in turn much interest and exasperation, "mother ought to check you, if Miss Harz wont.

Here Bertie extended her hand theatrically.

"I cry you mercy, ladies! when I come of an age to have beaux of my own, I shall understand perhaps, how to sympathize with your tender solicitude. But just now I find you equally incomprehensible. Both of the gentlemen in question are in love with Miss Harz. What's the use of squandering your young affections?" and she laughed mischievously.

Glances at once distrustful and inquisitive are directed to me. I remonstrate in turn, —

"Bertie, Bertie, how can you be so mischievous?" and she comes and kneels beside me, and whispers low, "The poor, poor fellow! he is dying of despair; but no one dreams of it except me. What did you write in your note that hurt him so?" and the young head lies upon my knee.

"Ah, Bertie," and my tears flow fast, so unexpectedly loosened.

"Never mind!" looking up suddenly and brightly, "he is coming out to dinner to-morrow, the doctor says he can. He prescribed port wine, but I know something that would do him more good — a wine called 'Tears of Exile;' here is one drop on my hand, he may kiss it off if he likes."

"Oh, Bertie! you surely would not," and here I paused.

"No, I would not; but don't be so stubborn. The man can't help being poor and ugly, and stupid and old, and disagreeable and a Yankee. You should not hate him for that. Besides he loves you so devotedly."

All this was said of course in undertones.

"Child, child, your folly is oppressive."

"Say wisdom rather. No preacher ever talked more to the point than I do now — not Mr. Fairleigh himself. By the bye, he will be here shortly. Mother's best friend; have you heard her speak of him? His brother used to be in love with her, you know."

I bowed for all reply; my heart was full, and I was glad when Madge and Marion, who for some moments had been whispering at the window, were summoned away and I was left alone to chide Bertie openly at first and to end by receiving her in my arms.

"Just tell me that you love him, Miss Harz; I will never, never breathe it to a living soul, not even to a reed! I do not ask from curiosity, but your heart will burst if you do not confide in somebody. Whisper it to me softly."

"Bertie,' I said "did Charlotte Cordé need to love anyone? You dream! Be content with your part of my affection, and ask nothing for others."

"Oh, but he is so miserable! I pity him so," and she clasped her slender hands, "I do indeed for all my foolishness."

"You do him injustice, child. He is a man of dignity, of courage, of rare moderation, not easily penetrated, believe me, by one of your years. His sufferings have a widely different source; do not enquire deeper, or you will offend irrevocably both him and me. Nay, Bertie, if you persecute me any further in this fashion I shall leave Beauseincourt."

She stood confounded. I had never menaced her with abandonment like this before, and she was cut to the heart.

"It is enough," she said; "that threat ends it all — for oh! what would life be without you now, my Miriam!" and she threw her arms about me; "yet this once let me plead for him; no one will love you better than he loves you, and your treatment is so cold, so unaccountable. Others think you detest Captain Wentworth and wonder at it; but I know better — yes I know better."

"Child," I said, "listen to me patiently for a moment. Your intelligence lifts you beyond your years, your affection entitles you to my confidence and you will understand me. Once before, I believed myself beloved, was deceived, and for a season blighted and half broken-hearted. I recovered — after what suffering, what struggles, God alone can know. I find myself well and strong again, but less confiding than of yore, guarded at every point. 'The burnt child dreads the fire,' you know. I cannot lightly surrender this boon of liberty, or render myself once more liable to mistreatment. I will place myself in the power of no man until I know him and myself more perfectly than I do now; subject myself to no second humiliation. I am poor, alone, and my energies and good name are all that remain to sustain me on my path of life. These I must cherish for a mighty purpose. I am girding myself up, Bertie, to strike a vital blow on the day of my majority; a blow at the success of my enemies. I am nerving myself for this, and this alone.

"My secret is my own. I can and will confide it to no one, involve no one else in my uncertain fortunes; and until all be made clear as the noonday sun makes the azure heavens, I will continue my solitary way.

"Bertie, you have a heroic heart. I think you can conceive of and appreciate my motives as many older and more experienced persons might not do. I cannot trust myself in the sphere of an influence that might endanger my peace, my purpose. Life is all before us; hereafter Captain Wentworth may understand me better; I cannot explain matters now."

She listened with grave attention.

"In the meantime," she said, "he must suffer it seems; may die perhaps. Ah, Miriam Monfort, you have an iron will beneath that soft, open exterior of yours, unsuspected until now! I little thought that I should ever plead for him when I jested about Miss Lurlie. But he is a noble man, and devoted to you — and if I were a few years older I should love him myself, I think, just to comfort him."

She shook her head.

"Comfort him if you can, dearest Bertie, in every possible right way, but never speak one syllable that has passed between us with regard to him, or I shall cease to respect you. Captain Wentworth would be little worth, either as a man or lover, did he let a few cold words and looks discourage him. If his regard for me be true, and honest and enduring, he will prove it yet. And as for me, I am far weaker than you think, Bertie, or I should not need to be on the defensive. Now leave this subject unstirred in the future, if you are indeed my friend."

She drew near to me, she grasped my hand.

"But that hint about Charlotte Cordé," she murmured, "that troubles me. What does it mean?"

"It need not, Bertie; I only used a comparison to denote my strength of purpose. My life would be insufficient to me without such atonement as I promise myself by the overthrow of an enemy. But I would not touch his life if I could, believe me, by the uplifting of a finger. I am no murderess, Bertie, either in heart or deed.

"Do you know I have always been afraid I would kill somebody, and be brought to trial, sometime or other," she mused. "This thought is a kind of temptation that besets me occasionally. It is very dreadful," and she lifted her hand to her brow in a bewildered way, "I was afraid you had the same feeling. It may be myself, though, after all," she added, with a ghastly smile, "but, oh, Miss Harz, concealment is a bitter burden, I think, whether we are guilty or innocent. Do you not find it so?" with startling abruptness.

"No, Bertie, no, my mystery has its limits and is only observed to ensure my personal safety. See here, my love," and I drew from its place of concealment that advertisement which had so harrowed my feelings when it met my eye, "read that, dear Bertie, and judge what my injuries are, what my feelings must be. I, a woman in the fullest possession of God's noblest gifts, reason and virtue, am hiding from people who would place me in a mad-house, could they find me — people who have a right in the eyes of the law to do this during my minority, through the medium of false oaths and bribes which they would use unscrupulously to effect their savage purpose, the end of which is, to force me into a loathsome marriage with a man from whom my

soul recoils." And I told her then of Bainrothe the elder and his persecutions.

Mute with indignation, with her large, clear eyes ablaze, her lips fixed in scorn, she read the ignominious publication, tossed down the paper and stamped on it with pale cheeks and grinding teeth.

"I would have their hearts' blood!" she exclaimed, passionately.

"No, Bertie, no, not that, only my rights, dear child," and I gathered up again and carefully folded the trampled sheet that bore such proofs of injustice on its very face.

"Thank God! thank God, the time of your justification approaches," she said vehemently, "you will throw off your burden of mystery then; you will be free again. It is otherwise with me," she continued in mournful tones, "I am a galley slave. I bear the chain and ball for life, and the brand besides, here," pressing her hand to her heart, "blacker, blacker than the grave."

Her head sunk on her breast, her slender fingers were intertwined convulsively, her whole expression of face and attitude were indescribably pathetic, at least to me, who held the clue of her Minotaur mystery. But of this she knew not, and recovering herself, she looked up and said in a changed voice, —

"You must not believe I have done anything wicked, Miss Harz, no, no, indeed! you know the very worst of me; but sometimes one becomes possessed by the merest accident, of the secrets of others, and then one is bound to keep them like one's own, you know, and the shadow they cast falls over our hearts also, and shuts us away from life and joy forevermore! 'The sins of the father,' you know the Bible says, 'are visited on'— but that would be scarcely applicable, of eourse," hesitating and coloring, unused as she was to a quibble, and twitching nervously at her apron-strings. "The community of sorrow you spoke of the other day, it is that, *that*, I mean."

"Yes, Bertie, that is an established law by which we must abide. But no heart is stained by the wrong-doing of others, however it may be burdened."

"Do you think so?" she interrogated vaguely, speaking like a person in a dream, "I cannot feel that way — I wish I could — but I shall walk alone through life on account of that shadow. No one else shall ever come under its bleak

influence for my sake and until the Judgment day it will cling about me."

"Death terminates all earthly burdens, Bertie," I said, gravely.

"No, no, I do not believe that; if I arise from the grave at all, I shall arise Bertie Lavigne, none other, and the same thoughts and memories will remain with me then that possess me now. Don't you think strong love and hatred endure beyond the grave, and the sense of injury? Do you expect to love your foe, Mr. Bainrothe, in Paradise?"

"What is the subject of this discussion?" asked Mr. Gregory, advancing upon us softly and suddenly.

We were in the drawing-room, the windows of which were lifted that lovely day in February, so as to admit the soft air and sunshine to warm its walls, for the hearth was now fireless, and dampness permeated the apartment. Bertie arose with a little cry.

"You startled me," she said, "my mind was on ghostly things. I did not know you for a moment, you came in so quietly upon us."

"Do I look so spiritual then?"

"No, but you walk like a spirit. It makes me afraid of you, Mr. Gregory."

"And you, Miss Harz, are you too afraid of me?" he asked, trying to look tenderly in my face.

"Oh, certainly! you are very terrific indeed, especially when you scowl in that way."

"But I want you to be afraid of me, I do, positively; that is the first step to a softer feeling, I think," laughing.

"Shakespeare did not think so," I rejoined, "when he said, 'Pity was akin to love,' but I see nothing about you to compassionate, Mr. Gregory."

"Except your self-conceit," interposed Bertie, contemptuously, adding a moment later, "and your corns; I can see them through your boots. What a martyr you must have been to tight shoes all your days."

My dear, dear young lady, you are clairvoyant, certainly; I thought that was a secret between me and my shoemaker. You are too penetrating, by half, Miss Bertie Lavigne; the man that marries you can hope for no concealments," with asperity which made no impression on its object, for by this time Bertie was almost out of hearing, having perceived Ossian on the gallery; an irresistible attraction to her ever,

for her spirits rose and fell as those only of the very young can do, with every new cause of excitement or depression. A flower, a dog, a rainbow, were enough to thrill and excite her, even when under the influence of such reflections as she had just been indulging in, and away she bounded now, with Ossian in full pursuit, graceful as a deer.

"Have you seen Captain Wentworth to-day, Miss Harz?" asked Mr. Gregory, "and how is he?"

"Better, I believe, but I have not seen him," I replied, carelessly.

"Ah! I thought you met every day!"

"You were misinformed or mistaken."

"Both, perhaps, you seemed very good friends at one time, though, I thought."

"We are still so I hope, Mr. Gregory."

"Yes?" interrogatively, raising his eyebrows, an impertinence and a solecism is this expression in itself to my ear, for the very sound of "yes," denotes its clenching quality. I never could bear that special affectation.

"That's a very pretty cameo pin, Miss Harz, a real onyx, I perceive. Your own profile is it not?" bending down to observe it closely.

"No, a silhouette of Sappho," unclasping it, with extreme disgust, "examine it if you like, Mr. Gregory, it is curiously well carved."

"Ah, exquisite, indeed," returning it blandly, "everything you wear, however simple, seems of the finest taste, the rarest quality, I observe," bowing with gracious condescension.

"I was once better off than I am now, and these things were purchased then," I said, replacing the pin coolly, "that accounts for all."

"So I thought," he observed seriously; "the mark of high-breeding and birth is indeed indelibly impressed upon you. Major Favrand, a good judge, remarked this in the beginning of your acquaintance. Bye the by what do you think of that affair — the duel I mean? duello as these folks so affectedly call it. Wentworth is acting out his character, one I penetrated from the first, you see, in refusing to shake hands. Favrand sought an interview before he went to New Orleans, but it was refused. I could have told him what the result would have been before, had he consulted me, however," clasping his own supple hands together.

"You esteem Captain Wentworth of an unforgiving disposition then, Mr. Gregory? What reason have you had to think so?" I asked impulsively.

"Cold men like him when once offended are implacable, you know. He is incapable of much ardor in any case — he, a man bent upon the prosecution of fortune and anxious to advance himself in any honorable way. Between ourselves, some consider him, I hear, where he is well known, a regular fortune-hunter" (confidentially.)

"I should not have thought so, Mr. Gregory — indeed," I hesitated, flushed — was this man drawing me out? What in any case need I care for his opinion? "He seems quite disinterested," I continued tamely, "very impartial even."

"High sounding professions amount to nothing, you know — and he never expresses a mean sentiment, which Bulwer says somewhere, is better than never feeling one, or the next thing, certainly. But with all his diffusive benevolence and talk about putting aside "*expediency*," Wentworth is a hollow man, I fear — that is, empty — I do not mean deceitful exactly, but he would not turn on his heel to serve a friend or hurt an enemy."

"Mr. Vernon's opinions are so different and he has known him much longer!" I could not help rejoining.

"Oh, Vernon is a shallow enthusiast! I think I estimate men correctly at a glance, I am naturally clairvoyant like yourself. But what am I doing? Casting out my usually carefully restrained opinions of others, as unguardedly as though I had known you all my life and had cause to place confidence in your discretion? What charm is there about you, Miss Harz, that commands men's souls to empty themselves at your very feet?"

"That is for you to decide, Mr. Gregory. I certainly am not conscious of exerting any art of this kind. I am not at all desirous to be the recipient of confidence, nor am I very confidential myself usually. You will oblige me in future"—

"Your nonchalance is beyond everything!" he interrupted; "who, and what do you care for, Miss Harz — or is it with you, as in the old song?" and he murmured,

"My heart's in the highlands,
My heart is not here,
My heart's in the highlands
A hunting *the* deer."

"*My* dear, rather, eh?" regarding me audaciously.

"Why do you care to know, Mr. Gregory?" I asked in his own spirit; "you are not a 'roe,' are you, though you well know how to fawn."

"Because, — because," and he bowed his head before me, covered with shining black hair, straight and sleek, and yet so full of a sort of individual life, that it looked as if every hair might suddenly curl up and creep away, a tiny serpent. His mood seemed suddenly changed.

"'Because' is a woman's reason, Shakespeare says," I said, and laughed.

"Then hear a man's;" and he suddenly seized my wrists, with characteristic audacity, and drew me irresistibly near to him, looking steadfastly in my shrinking eyes. "Because you interest me more than any woman I ever saw," he said, between his set teeth. "Because I love, adore you! because you madden me; there, if you will have it!" and he literally flung my hands away from him, seizing his hat and rushing instantly from the apartment, as Madge entered it.

"Why what on earth possesses Mr. Gregory to-day? he came very near knocking me down as I came in, like a collision of express trains, as the Northern papers say. Oh! I wish by the bye, we had railroads, Miss Harz; one running past our gate! I shouldn't stay long at a time at Beauseincourt, I assure you. But what makes you laugh so strangely? You were pale enough when I came in."

"Oh, some of Mr. Gregory's nonsense. Yes, Madge, I wish we had a train passing our gate to-day; I believe I should take wing at once. The wires work so discordantly in 'Lesdernier,' these engineers have set us all crazy."

"Do you find Mr. Gregory interesting, Miss Harz?" very solemnly, and as one asking with authority.

"Tolerably, — he is better than nobody — better than Crane and Collins and Duganne and the rest of those indigenous youths, or even Yorke; this is about the best I can say for him."

"Oh, I think him quite fascinating!" with a relieved air; "but you have seen so much more of the world than we have, that you are hard to please, of course. You even find it a bore to talk with Captain Wentworth, I perceive, and he is very agreeable, I think."

"I am of your opinion, Madge. But I scarcely think it my place exactly, to seek Captain Wentworth's society, under the circumstances. It is simply your duty, being at

home, to entertain your wounded guest. But when school is over I am weary and need repose."

"I did not think of that; besides we all think you are engaged, Miss Harz, you are so indifferent to gentlemen. Madame Favrand remarked this to mother."

"She did me injustice Madge. I like all clever persons and amiable ones, without regard to sex. I should be sorry to discriminate otherwise. A dull woman is even worse to me than a dull man; for the last I can escape from. 'I like a child that cries,' said the Abbè Coreæ; 'it is carried away.' On this principle I prefer stupid men."

"Did any one carry Gregory away, I wonder?" said Madge, looking around; "he seemed to be in tears! I do believe he has been making love to you, Miss Harz, and that Bertie was right," eagerly.

"Nonsense, Madge! you should not say such things. He would scarcely presume so far, and I fear I should laugh derisively in his face, were he to begin."

"Or behind his back, as you did," added Madge, pouting evidently. "But I don't know why I should care to know, I am sure," she soliloquized; "Mr. Gregory is nothing to me," patting her foot impatiently.

"And I hope may never be, Madge; I don't fancy that man somehow, I confess. He seems too old for his years," I rejoined.

"But he is so fascinating, Miss Harz," turning suddenly to me again. "Oh! you cannot think how much so, when he chooses. Such an accomplished complimenter!"

"Flatterer, rather! Beware, Madge! Don't lend ear to such serpents. Vernon is worth ten of Gregory"

"Vernon! why he is cut and dried, in comparison! Gregory is charming company and witty as an Irishman, as father says. Not handsome, but with so much expression!"

"He has diagonal eyes, like a Japanese, a head shaped like a cocoa-nut, yellow, uneven teeth, a sharp nose that runs to one side, a coarse mouth to the other, a retreating chin, a goatee beard cut in a point, and funnel-shaped ears. What could be uglier than this description, Madge, except the reality? Then his complexion is dingy, rather than dark, which would be infinitely preferable if clear, and his smile is at once broad and cunning."

"Yet he is irresistible," murmured Madge, "that is, when he chooses to be. Such grace, such manners, such variety,

such a voice, such a speaking eye, — no man ever had before, I verily believe. I am quite disinterested in saying all this, Miss Harz. I am indeed! Mr. Gregory is nothing to me, and never can be — but a very agreeable beau for the season! I am sure I am altogether too young to attract a man of the world like him — twenty-seven, if he is a day, and so fond of style and life! Besides that I do not fancy him particularly."

"I am glad to hear you say that; he would not add to your happiness, I think, on nearer acquaintance. He is a person of ill-regulated tongue and temper both, I perceive, and those are very important considerations in matrimony."

"Yes, yes indeed," observed Madge, thoughtfully.

"Dissipated as Duganne is, I think him the better man of the two," I continued.

"No doubt he is," quoth Madge, with an expression of unconcealed delight which made me survey her for a moment earnestly.

"I believe you like to hear me censure Mr. Gregory, Madge," I said, sharply.

She only laughed and kissed me a dozen times as if to relieve her embarrassment, whereupon, I too, was obliged to smile — having detected her pretty stratagem.

When we were called to dinner, to my surprise Captain Wentworth entered with Gregory, leaning on a cane. Had we met on the day following, according to Bertie's announcement, I should have been prepared, but now, the surprise was so sudden, that it unnerved me, and I could scarcely command myself sufficiently to congratulate him with others, on his reappearance in public.

Colonel Lavigne seemed quite elated, and ordered more "old Madeira," in honor of the invalid and his aides.

"And where are Yorke and Vernon?" he asked, "why did not they come too? I like Vernon. He is a gentleman if a Yankee! No offence to you, gentlemen, of course, who are Virginians, we discover. But you know that sort of thing is so rare."

"And so is your beef, I am happy to observe," said Gregory, with his usual impertinent tact, marking the cloud perhaps that crept over Captain Wentworth's brow at the words of his host. "Another slice if you please, Colonel Lavigne, rare and juicy. You see I eat fast; but it is so long since I sat down to a Christian table, that I feed like a

savage. Vernon too is relapsing into a primitive condition for want of table implements, although as you say a Yankee gentleman that 'rara avis.'"

"We will drink to Vernon, that is inclusively," said Colonel Lavigne, lifting his glass, and bowing courteously. "Absent friends;" adding in his trite, old-fashioned way, as he set down his glass, "a toast that suits everybody I believe." After which generally directed remark, as is usual in such cases, there was an obstinate silence, during the continuance of which, a low and timid tap was heard at the dining-room door. Jura opened it quietly, but Colonel Lavigne turned to find out the intruder, who stood at his back by this time parleying with the waiter.

"Who is it Jura—who is it? Shut the door. The draught is disagreeable, and I thought the law was laid down on that head; no intruders suffered at meals."

"It is only little Cora, master," inclining his head respectfully, "and she says please come 'megently, sir, de ole man is mighty bad agin,— mos dead dis time."

"By Jove! I wish he was quite dead, and then I should be suffered to eat in peace," rising as he spoke. "The key of the medicine chest, my dear; believe you have it. I must go and weigh out powders at once, for this old heathen, or Charon will catch him minus an obolus."

"Can't you finish your dinner first, Colonel Lavigne? little Cora can wait."

"But death will not, my dear, unfortunately. Old Jake is struggling with Azrael, no doubt, by this time. His attacks are sudden and dangerous."

"An' mammy say, please mistus, send her a drawin' ob tea," added the wee voice of little Cora, uplifted like a fife, who, with a shawl reaching to her heels and a gigantic black bonnet on her head, evidently her mother's, an ark-like and funereal affair of the past, stood fully revealed by this time, having glided inside of the door when Jura closed it.

"Sit still my dear, I will get everything this clamorous family need, myself," said Colonel Lavigne, preparing to leave the room, followed by little Cora — walking with difficulty, and mincing in a pair of shoes, turned up at the toes like gondolas. She had evidently made an ambitious, if hasty toilet, before setting forth for the mansion house, on her errand in quest of aid for her ill grandfather.

Colonel Lavigne came in again at the dessert and resumed his seat at the table.

"It is a question with me," he remarked somewhat peevishly, "whether it would not be morally right to put old Jake to death, as Napoleon is said to have done his sick in Egypt, or at all events to let him die for want of medicines. His life is useless to himself and a nuisance to every one else. His own children are tired of him. He costs a great deal both for food and attendance, and his requisitions on my time and attention are preposterous. I can understand the feeling which actuated Henry the Second, with regard to Thomas a-Becket whom he dispatched indirectly across the sea by wishing alone for his death. In the words of that monarch I exclaim, 'Is there no one who will rid me of old Jake!" and he gazed around him.

Mr. Gregory laughed, but Captain Wentworth looked puzzled and grave rather than amused.

"You remember Rousseau's problem, Colonel Lavigne," he observed at last, "which philosophers found it so difficult to resolve, but which simpler men saw only one answer to, seek as they might for another solution?"

"I have forgotten if I ever heard it," was the reply. "Refresh my memory, or instruct my ignorance as it may be, if not too troublesome."

"The proposition was simply this, as I recollect it. 'If by lifting the hand to the head, a mandarin in China, might be slain by his antipodes, who had never realized his existence in any shape, and who might uninterruptedly enjoy his vast wealth as the consequence of such a mechanical motion, would it or would it not be murder?"

There was a momentary silence, for the last words were impressively delivered, and the impression they made was that of universal conviction.

Colonel Lavigne alone shook his head. "The philosophers had the best of it," he said slowly. "It is a matter involving doubt, to say no more. There are very few of us who might not be tempted to enrich ourselves in so simple a fashion, I, for one" —

"Would not dare to so offend your God!" shouted Bertie Lavigne, and her tiny fist came down on the table with a force that made the glasses shiver. "Oh, father, father! what a lesson to teach your children — your slaves! For shame sir, for shame! you a parent and a master!"

She had arisen now, and with clasped hands and tears streaming from her eyes, was standing by her father's chair,

her visage convulsed and pale, her slight form dilated into a presence and a power, in her strong passion.

"Leave the room, Bertie," said her father, huskily; "you are possessed at times I believe. Go child, to your chamber, instantly, and without a remonstrance."

She withdrew. The little scene was over as quickly as a pistol flash. I saw that Madame Lavigne and Captain Wentworth were greatly shocked, though from different reasons probably. But Colonel Lavigne regained his imperturbability after a few moments, and, dropping the subject of discussion, continued to converse cheerfully until the dinner was ended.

It is a strange feeling to reverently hold the clues of conduct, that in the sight of others less enlightened, seems inconsistent, if not absurd. Nothing had ever touched me more than this bitter, passionate outburst on the part of that suffering child, hoarding her secret of anguish from all eyes, yet at times touched through its possession into agony unexplained and unendurable.

The Spartan boy might have felt as she did, when the hidden fox was gnawing at his vitals, and given way perhaps to a few outcries as little comprehended by those who heard and penetrated not the cause.

Miss Edgworth in her ingenious story of "Belinda" lets us into the interior of great suffering, by introducing us, through the mistake of her heroine, into the secret dressing-room of a fashionable woman, struggling with mortal disease. A cancer, with its hideous accessories. So that what seemed the retreat of frivolity at first, became in Belinda's eyes the refuge of heroism in the end; and in this light I alone saw, or could see, the behavior of Bertie Lavigne.

CHAPTER XVI.

IT was determined a few days later, on the part of his hosts, that no further opposition should be made to the removal of Captain Wentworth to the Refuge, as his health was rapidly improving, and as he earnestly desired to be where he could, without restraint, superintend his aides and have them constantly about him.

A day was set for his departure and his evacuation of the "den" of the lion of the establishment which he had been obliged very unwillingly to retain, on account of his inability to ascend a stairway; Doctor Durand having, for reasons best known to himself, vetoed any effort of this kind.

In the meantime he came constantly to the drawing-room, and whenever he found me there, attached himself as of old, much to my society, notwithstanding the frigid line of demarcation I had drawn of late for his observance.

As to Gregory, he evidently scarcely knew what to make of me or my behavior, at the same time courteous and careless, and vainly tried to penetrate my secret. In truth I shall ever believe that my extreme indifference to this conceited individual, lay at the root of his so-called passion for me, a fancy so fatal to my peace, as it nearly proved. Men of his stamp cannot brook to be ignored in any way, and he must have seen from the beginning, that his boasted powers of fascination were absolutely at fault in my case and as far as I was concerned. A sense of the ridiculous too, had been excited in my breast, by his sudden explosion of baseless sentiment, which he had sagacity enough to perceive, and pride enough to resent. He had hesitated, evidently, as to how he should proceed, since the day of his abrupt declaration, and had avoided me as much as possible on the principle of anticipating avoidance on my part.

I remember the first evening on which he took notice of me again as a part of the goodly company of Beauseincourt.

The young people had been playing forfeits — and it was Edward Yorke's turn to pay a penalty in the shape of a recitation of some sort. In a spirit of boyish fun, he delivered himself on the spur of the moment of a quaint poem, that I recognized at once as an old acquaintance.

Standing in the middle of the floor, with his hands pinioned to his side, like a timid school-boy, his feet turned in, his face drawn down into a most lugubrious semblance of earnestness, he declaimed the following verses, with a nasal twang purposely assumed, for our amusement :

"I wonder why by foul-mouthed men,
Women so slandered be,
Since it is plainly evident
They're better far, than we.
Why do the Muses every one
Pictured as women be,
If not to show, that they in art
Do more excel than we?
Why do the gentle Charities
Pictured as women be,
If not to prove that they in them,
Do more excel than we?
Why are the" —

Here the deliverer of this quaint morceau, scratched his flaxen head dubiously — either in real or affected embarrassment, — which found no time for spontaneous relief, for quick as a flash, Gregory struck in, glancing at me vengefully as he did so, and emphasizing the italicized word,

"Why are the *Furies*, every one
Pictured as women be,
If not to show" —

"You are quite out of your text, Mr. Gregory," I interrupted coolly; "the poem is an old acquaintance of mine and your impromptu verse, is at war with its whole spirit."

"I stand corrected Miss Harz," he observed, rising and bowing profoundly. Then slowly approaching me, he sat quietly down beside me with a subjugated air, saying as he did so, "you have read everything I believe, and have the most astonishing memory! Nature designed you for what you are, that is plain, an instructor of youth."

"You could not pay me a greater compliment, Mr. Gregory. I have sometimes doubted until this moment, my fitness to be a teacher, even when accident has placed the rod in my hands."

"Alas! what is it that you do not teach? If you would

only confine your lessons to the school-room now, it would be legitimate, but you come abroad to lay your wand of power on all men's shoulders. Mine still smart."

"Yours, fortunately, are very broad and stalwart, Mr. Gregory. I do not fear, I confess, to oppress them long with any rule of mine."

"There was no question of rule you know, only of a rod."

"I shall have to set you down as a humorist, after which I shall find you endurable perhaps. But odd people, I confess, are my aversion."

"You resemble Napoleon in that respect," he said; "in that *only*, but I can trace your likeness to Rochefoucauld all the time, Miss Harz, in bitter apothegm."

"Yet Madame de Sevigne describes the author of 'Les Maximes,' as a most amiable person. Kind to all about him, though sorely afflicted with gout. He wrote those maxims out of his brain, believe me, not his heart. I should like to be judged as charitably."

"Then you must go elsewhere for judgment. But is it possible you have delved through old Sevigne's letters? I never could read one of them, after I found out she was a prude. Love-letters are the only ones women ever write well, I think. I acknowledge they excel there."

"I have never had the pleasure of reading any feminine love-letters," I observed demurely.

"What, not those of Heloise to Abelard? Not Rousseau's Julie to Emile? Not the passionately beautiful letter of Julia to Don Juan?"

"I speak of real, live love-letters, Mr. Gregory — such as came from a mortal woman's pen," I said, waiving his question. "I am a stranger to such literature, I repeat."

"Napoleon told Las Cases though, that he believed (and he always penetrated motives you know) that Madame de Sevigne had loved M. de Pompone, or was it Fouquet? I forget which; he did not believe in Platonic, disinterested friendship like that, between man and woman; *nor do I.*"

"It was like him to cherish such opinions."

"You do not admire Napoleon, then? Well, for my part I wonder that any woman should. You see he knew the sex perfectly — assigned it its true position rigidly. For instance in his well known reply to Madame de Stäel's absurd question. Do you remember it?"

"You do me injustice when you assert that I do not

admire Napoleon," I rejoined, ignoring purposely, his last remarks and question. "I do admire him as a man of heroic courage and undoubted genius. A Greek of the old empire in many phases of his character; even in his half-civilized consideration of women, of which you speak. And here we know the Greeks were wanting more than in all else. But I do not esteem Napoleon, nor consider him thoroughly great. He was petty, selfish, frivolous, vain, even when important issues influenced his motives. Then his conduct to Josephine; what woman could forgive that?"

"Oh, you misconceive Josephine altogether! She was a very frail person, I imagine, and merely attached to him as a means of success. It was high time she should have found her level, when, in the pride of his ambition, her husband put her away. She died of sore throat, you remember, not of broken heart at all."

"I *do* remember! Now let us turn to Washington, by way of contrast. What is your estimate of him, Mr. Gregory? I particularly wish to know."

"A good, old bell-weather, who jumped first over the fence. That is almost the amount of the matter. The rest of the flock followed, of course, and the wolves were too slow for them. That is the whole history of the Revolution."

"A degrading parallel truly."

"Oh! you are such a literalist. Washington was a very respectable mediocre man of course, and quite strategic, if not decidedly courageous. But I never could place him for one moment on the same platform with Napoleon."

"Nor I," was the significant reply. "Yet it was not until lately that I recognized all the divinity of his genius."

"And what was your open sesame?"

"The opinions of a thoughtful mind, expressed in words of fervid and earnest truth." It gave me malicious pleasure to say these words.

"What book of platitudes have you been perusing? My copy-book informed me that 'Washington was a hero,' but it never added, 'also a divine genius;' and great as was my confidence in that mentor of my childhood, I should not have believed it if it had. But you of course being a 'schoolmarm'"—

"Lend implicit faith to its teachings," I interrupted, smiling. "Now what is a chain-carrier in the scale of humanity, that he should presume to taunt me about my

vocation? For that matter, Socrates and Plato were both teachers, and so were Aspasia and Hypatia."

"Yes, that is true. And could I be Pericles" —

"But you cannot," I replied, coloring deeply at the license I had impulsively given him; forgetting as I had done for the moment the life, in the intellect of Aspasia. "You can never be other than you are I fear, a very presumptuous, volatile, mediocre man, with a bright mind and cold heart;" and I left him abruptly.

The last day of Captain Wentworth's proposed stay at Beauseincourt! I remember it well, that lovely day in the end of February — balmy as spring, bracing as autumn; brighter than either had ever seemed to me in other regions. All the land was awake now with blossoms, and birds, and vernal expectancy. The yellow jessamine flung its long, golden wreaths over tree, and shrub, and arbor, indigenous as it is, and yet valued as an inmate of every garden and shrubbery in the South; the only flower I know of that falls to the ground unwithered, like genius slain in its prime. The fittest and fairest emblem of sudden death we possess, which so often means only translation.

The trumpet had been sounded at last, to awake the sleepers by the breath of Spring. Roses came trooping forth at her call, and violets, and jonquils, and hyacinths, made the earth we trod on fragrant, widely diffused as they were, almost to redundancy, in the grounds of Beauseincourt.

"We have gotten through the winter after all, pretty well, Madge, in spite of your gloomy predictions," I said, as we walked up and down the wide avenue of the great vegetable garden, bordered by fig trees, white and purple, towards sunset, in which *Uncle Quimbo* at the head of a host of others was diligently plying his spade. "And now this is spring in earnest; your genial, affluent, Southern spring. How sweet the mould smells! and yet how we all shrink from lying down beneath it," I soliloquized.

"But the best of spring is, that dear Walter will be here in less than a month, and we shall all be so happy then, — rain or no rain. You will like him so much, Miss Harz."

"I have never doubted it, Madge, since I heard Captain Wentworth," — I hesitated. I had not meant to *quote* from such a source; "praise his courage and humanity," I continued, faintly. "I like these qualities."

"Ah, I thought that might make against Walter, as you

seem so careless of Captain Wentworth's opinions ordinarily, as well as those of Mr. Gregory. You are hard to please, Miss Harz, yet you extolled Vernon to the skies, I remember, who is not the equal of either of those gentlemen, as far as I can judge, or even of little Yorke for mere smartness."

"Vernon is an admirable young man, I think Madge. You know we all have our fancies, but I confess to a weakness for him, especially."

"Not brilliant though! I idolize brilliancy, in whatever shape it appears; lame, or blind, or deformed, it matters not."

"The most brilliant youth I ever knew, *was* lame," I rejoined. "I wish you knew him, Madge," with a sigh; "I wish I knew where he was! He was my consolation for all ills in childhood."

"I wish indeed you did, if he is a friend of yours, and brilliant besides. Where is this '*rara avis*' now, Miss Harz?"

"Abroad, I suppose, receiving an education in Germany; at least so I have heard." "Dead, for aught I know," was the echo of my heart, a moment later.

"In Germany! That was where Captain Wentworth studied his profession; I heard him say so. He told mother that when he was a mere lad, he left an unhappy home, (his father was intemperate, I believe) to go before the mast. A gentleman going to Russia on the same ship, to make public roads for the Emperor Nicholas, fancied him and took him on his staff as a little chain-bearer, I think he said. Afterwards, becoming sincerely attached to him, he placed him at school in Prussia, at his own expense. When he came back to the United States, his mother was dead, much to his disappointment; his father, poor and degraded, had died long before. He had hoped to support his mother's declining years out of his earnings, but his whole family had disappeared. There is but one person living in whose veins, to his knowledge, his blood flows, a niece or nephew, I forget which — very rich, he adds, and for this and some other reasons, unapproachable by him. Isn't it a sad history, Miss Harz?"

"Not very," I answered carelessly; "rather a successful one I think. But self-made men are the happiest, I believe, after all, if not always the most agreeable."

"Miss Harz! I do believe you mean to be sarcastic!

Ever since you have found that Wentworth and Gregory were Southern men, you have hated them both. Now that Yankee Vernon!" —

"The Esquimaux, as your mother considers him," I interrupted. "Well, well, dear Madge, I plead guilty, rather than contend. Have it your own way. But what in the world is Bertie peeping at over there?"

"Oh, the hot beds. Her curiosity is unbounded, you know. But the odor is enough for me. Guano is not fragrant;" and she tossed her pretty, sensitive *retrousée* nose in the air. "There is Louey, Miss Harz, telegraphing. Mother wants me, I suppose as usual, just at the wrong time. Excuse me a moment," and she left me hurriedly.

I strolled leisurely along to join Bertie, who met me with uplifted hands and laughing eyes.

"What do you think father is raising in his hot-bed, as secret as the grave about it too, as though it enshrined some profound mystery?"

"Pineapples at least."

"Why nothing but poor little contemptible cantelope melons. First cousins to musks and pumpkins as they are; and the poorest of cultivated fruits in my estimation. Even cucumbers are a thousand times better to my taste, on account of the requisite vinegar."

She was in her very finest "King Cambyses vein," evidently, as she pursued gayly, —

"The dear old gentleman must be daft! don't you think so? If he would only wait till May, cantelopes would crawl all around him of their own accord."

"My dear Bertie, an admirable detective was lost in you. But why will you put your nose into the affairs of your elders?"

"My nose indeed, my eyes rather! What do people go about for, if not to look? What are eyes made for else? If the old parrot himself had been near a hot-bed, mysteriously covered up, he would have peeped no doubt, and told about it too in his inflated way. Somewhat in this style, perhaps," and she improvised, —

> "Melons, mellifluous — many lobèd — mellow,
> There lay at lazy length, robust and yellow,
> Enough to craze the brain of a greedy fellow!"

"That isn't the least bit Shakespearian, Bertie, rather in Leigh Hunt's style, I think, as far as parody can be."

She laughed merrily. "You always defend the old parrot!"

"But seriously, Miss Harz, I have a great mind to pull every vine up by the roots, just to give father a useful lesson."

"Your useful lessons had better come to a close, Bertie, before you offend your father irretrievably," I said, seriously. "He did not relish greatly the one you gave him before a dinner-table audience the other day, I saw very plainly; he has looked upon you a little coldly ever since.

"And a little suspiciously for the first time? It is strange, she mused, "how very dull he is about some things, how sharp about others! I had a pair of scissors once, very much like his mind, with one dull and one sharp blade, and the consequence was, they hacked everything to pieces that they closed upon. But I am sorry to have grieved and offended him;" shaking her head. "I could not help what I said though, 'for that way madness lies,'" extending one hand and veiling her face with the other, I thought she pointed designedly towards Bellevue, but it may have been accidentally, after all.

"There comes your father, Bertie. Go and greet him pleasantly," I suggested.

She looked up, evidently intending to obey me.

"He has not seen us," she said; "he is intent upon his hot-beds. See! he is letting down the frame again, which I had propped open." Adding, after a pause, as if some new conviction had suddenly flashed over her, "My God! such a dreadful idea! It struck me like a knife;" and she wreathed her arms about her head, and stood for a time in statuesque silence, like a Caryatid — then dropping them again, looked out eagerly once more in his direction, murmuring audibly with clasped hands: "See! where he strides, shadow and all! What a dismal figure of fate he presents to us! How very considerate all at once he has become, of the tastes of others!" smiling bitterly. "Father, father! it was not thus I thought of you once; not thus;" in tones of poignant anguish. "Oh! who will restore me to my lost opinion?" Tears were flowing down her face now.

"Bertie, Bertie!" and I shook her slightly. "What possesses you?"

"I tell you I have been inside of the Blue-beard chamber,

Miriam Monfort; you never have; how can you judge me then? Sometimes I wish I too were an idiot, if only to forget. Not like that horror over there," indicating Bellevue by a motion of her hand; "but a gentle, happy idiot, pleasant to look on, — there are such things, — sitting in the sun all day murmuring a monotonous tune, as the bees hum — babbling like a brook — caring for nobody."

"Child, child, you distress, you alarm me! Let us go to our chamber for awhile; I fear you have fever again. Doctor Durand" —

"Doctor Gandercap," she interrupted, laughing bitterly. "'My pulse as yours, doth temperately keep time, and makes as healthful music.' Feel it, if you doubt me." Then speaking hurriedly and low, "That old parrot knew everything, didn't he? medicine and all; and you are a kind of half-way physician yourself, you know; a quack, clairvoyante, and all that, so grandfather Durand tells us."

We walked along in silence now. I myself, began at last, to tremble for Bertie's reason — so frequent were these spells of late; so constantly with her, evidently, the presence of one fixed idea.

"Do you know," — she said, "Miss Miriam," pausing suddenly, and looking at me at last, with those seraphic eyes of hers, clear as aqua marine, and soft as morning glories, when the right spirit possessed her, and gradually returning now to their rightful expression.

"Do you know that I feel the coming of our fate as plainly as though its shadow fell above me; as one looking on the ground, feels a cloud, sailing along in the heavens, though itself unseen?" Then, after a sorrowful pause — "Something dark, and strange, is to happen soon at Beauseincourt! Not to you, not to any stranger within our gates; be not alarmed. But for ourselves, this doom stands ready. No; I am not mistaken, I wish I were. I wish this fatal gift of second sight, were *not* my dower, as it has been, they tell me, that of others of our race. I would far rather be light-hearted and free from care, like the rest; but there is one scape-goat always in large families, you know, and Providence has selected me to lay its hands on, and send forth to the desert, for wise purposes, no doubt, though I shall never understand them, I suppose;" and she shook her head mournfully, while a strange, sorrowful smile wreathed her lips. "God never explains to his poor worms, you know; his creatures of dust. Why doesn't he, I wonder?"

"To true faith this is not necessary, Bertie, and why should He condescend to unlock his mysteries for the skeptic?"

"Why indeed, unless He cares to convince?" she mused.

I made no rejoinder. I had long since found the uselessness of such discussions.

"We are not worth the trouble, I suppose," she added. "Let me tell you something," she exclaimed, after a short silence, her eyes still fixed on space, though her hand now firmly grasped my arm. "The first Prosper Lavigne, the only son of that elegant Huguenot gentleman, whose picture is in the string of family portraits in the hall up stairs. That old horror, I mean, with the eagle beak, the grisly beard, and his hand on the iron sword handle. He too, was a persecutor, Miss Harz! He had a mad wife, (not our ancestress, by any means — no, no; *we* are all sane to our fingers' ends, you know, though my great grandfather cut his throat in a fit of the blues — a very good riddance, no doubt, but a second wife greatly younger than himself, who left no children) — and he locked her up in our schoolroom, and chained her there, and beat her, and starved her, they say, until at last he killed her! Yes, that is the family legend. Cousin Celia Favrand, who is truth itself, told it to mother in my hearing, when I was a very little child, as established beyond a doubt in the minds of his posterity; though in this lonely place, there was no strange eye to watch and report, and negroes, you know, never testify with us in court. It is illegal. Besides that, they are such liars and cowards! But what tales the old attic could tell! Some say she walks there yet of nights. I don't know, I am sure; I wish I did. I never heard her, though once I thought I saw her coming down the staircase. Now, you see we are reaping the consequences; don't you understand? 'The sins of the father shall be visited on the children,' the Prayer book says. *That* is how I apply this prophecy!"

"And this is your shadow, Bertie! Banish it at once," I said, infinitely relieved by the diversion of her fancy.

"I did not tell you so," she rejoined, looking at me with kindling eyes and quivering lips. No, no indeed! it lies far nearer at home;" pressing her hand to her heart, and again, after a few minutes of deep silence, she concealed her face, this time with both of her trembling hands.

"Bertie," I said, "your mother's health is delicate; we must all guard her from care as far as we can, you among others. Your excitable behavior displeases and mortifies her. Captain Wentworth himself, your friend and admirer before, looked shocked the other day at your outburst at the dinner-table, and I thought Madame Lavigne would have fainted she turned so ashen pale."

"Is it possible?" lowering her hands from her face and looking at me gravely, "Oh, I am sorry! I would not hurt my mother for anything in the world. There is so much before her still, so much to bear!"

Still that fatal idea of unavertible doom; still that dark glance of prophesy!

"Command yourself, dear child, it will be for the good of all. And in making the effort for the sake of *appearances*, the mind will grow calm again. These moods are unworthy a girl of your sense and feeling."

"Are they? Help me to conquer them then, by your example and forbearance."

She said this, kissing my cheek and pressing my hand, and a moment afterwards we returned tranquilly together to the house.

Captain Wentworth was to proceed to the Refuge early in the morning, he informed us, and he begged for music as a parting grace. Marion and I sang and played as usual, but I was steel to his entreaties for "that song" again. "That old and antique song I heard last night," as he expressed it, referring to my Spanish melody.

"No, I will never more sing that song. I believe it is too passionate," I said, "it does my calm soul injustice."

"You are right then," he murmured, and turned away disappointed. "Right never to sing it more for me, at least."

Some game of chance at cards was introduced, and time was muddled away in this fashion, until the bed hour came, eleven at Beauseincourt, by one of the quaint, despotic rules of the master, who rivalled Procrustes in many of his ways. Cutting or stretching time even, to suit his inexorable bedstead.

At three o'clock in the morning I was awakened by a low, roaring noise in the roof, and the smell of smoke in the chamber, and opening the door that gave on the gallery, I saw the back stairway, our peculiar property, in a blaze.

We were in the longer ell, as I have said, with a shingle roof above us, in no way connected with that of the principal and higher building which was of slate. The gallery now presented our only means of escape. I wakened Bertie at once, and explained matters to her, as quickly and quietly as possible, and we went to work with trembling fingers to tie sheets together so as to let ourselves down securely, if the worst came. In the meantime the cries of Sylphy, who slept in our dressing-room, aroused the household and a few minutes later the plantation engine with its hose attached to the cistern, was playing away on the ell we inhabited by the judicious directions of Colonel Lavigne.

The stove in the pantry on which a tea-kettle had boiled, had been left burning when the servants retired, and by means of an imperfect flue had fired the roof, (we knew later), of the small, low ell, opposite to the higher and longer addition, in which we slept. It had made its way steadily downwards and across, following the woodwork, so that we were cut off as by a bridge of flame from access to the great stairway of the main building, as well as the lesser.

It is out of place certainly to revert to causes here, when results were still undecided ; for as yet no one had come to our deliverance, and we saw with consternation the small ell containing the closets and pantries, with its upper chambers, fall in, and cover the ground with its blazing fragments, before we succeeded with nervous fingers in tying our swathe of bed clothes to the railing of the portico.

At the moment when Bertie was about to make the first venture (her heroism gave her this privilege), a ladder placed against the gallery, attracted our attention ; and scarcely a second later, as it seemed to us, Wentworth and Gregory stood safely beside us.

I stood with my desk beneath my arm, Bertie with her treasured paint-box in hers, Sylphy bearing a pile of shawls and wrappings, when we were made conscious of other preparation for our rescue, and we were at once handed down the ladder without a superfluous word, by our sure-footed guides, and soon found ourselves secure on terra firma. Colonel Lavigne, stepping forward from the line of water carriers, who were aiding the hose in its good work, waived us into the library, the nearest place of safety ; the way to the central building being obstructed by the still smouldering remains of the pantry, on which, legions of bearers of

buckets, like dusky imps, were employed in dashing water. The gamâts of the plantation were quite useful on this occasion, and acted their part of "supes" perfectly.

"They will know you are safe," he said, "which is all that is essential, just now. This wing is in no danger, and you might get dreadfully scorched in trying to pass the flames. Come Gregory, leave the ladies to the care of the invalid, and help me work. Even Favrand is making himself available to-night, for a wonder."

They went their ways, and while Sylphy was arranging us in wrappers and shawls, Captain Wentworth paced the gallery without; the low window leading to which, was open. Suddenly I saw him enter through this opening pale as a ghost, stagger towards the couch, and before he reached it, fall; and when Bertie and I rushing to him, simultaneously bent above him, we found the white matting of the floor on which he was lying, bathed with blood. The wound in his side was bleeding afresh, and his life perhaps depended on obtaining immediate assistance. But how to procure it? Just then Major Favrand put his head in the window most opportunely.

"I am coming in here to rest," he said, "with your permission, ladies. I have already risked my life to save a barrel of flour for Louisa, and now she thinks me unreasonble, because I will not plunge through the flames after a jar of jam! So, I strike for higher wages. But what's that on the floor? Any one hurt? Wentworth! by all that's sacred! What ails him, Miss Harz? Stand back, — let me lift him to the couch. Call Cimon, Bertie, to help me — there, at the step with my horse. Tell him to hitch Cyrus at the cistern, to the old bear pole you know, and hurry here. Your handkerchief, Miss Harz; never mind, mine will answer every purpose. I merely want it to staunch the blood. Bertie, take the flask out of my pocket; now pour a little between his lips. Steady, my child! He will swallow presently. Nonsense! not dead at all, only insensible. Now Cimon, give us an easy hand good boy, that's your sort fellow! Lay him down quietly. The couch is the better place of the two. Both bad enough though, for a gentleman like this, the noblest Roman of us all, Miss Harz, if he is a Yankee!" with tears in his voice, if not in his eyes.

But still the crimson tide continued to well from his side, and still the spell of unconsciousness continued.

"He is dying, Major Favrand; for God's sake send some one for Doctor Durand," I urged desperately.

"Certainly, that is just what I am about to do. Cimon, jump on black Cyrus, and gallop over for Doctor Durand. Don't kill the horse, if you can help it, but make it in an hour's time at the farthest, at any cost. There! be off my good fellow, every minute is important now. Miss Harz, make me a better compress than this. Fold a napkin if you have one. There, that will answer admirably! My God," murmuring to himself, and striking his brow; "just as I thought all was going on so well; but it is my infernal luck! To die at my hands! when everything was over, and life began to look fair to me again. It is too cruel!" and he ground his teeth audibly. "Where is that sneaking Gregory?" he pursued. "What is any man's house to him at a time like this?" and he glanced around.

"He did not know of Captain Wentworth's need, when he went out to assist in extinguishing the fire; he is not to blame at all. Do let me assist you, Major Favrand, Bertie too," I faltered. "We surely can do something."

"Be more heroic then!" he commanded; "Stop whimpering. Hold the light here, Bertie. Get me the laudanum, Miss Harz — lint — Peruvian bark —more bandages. You will find all there in the medicine chest, and there it sits in the corner — unlocked, fortunately and for a wonder, the key is in the lock I see, by some special order of Providence. I am holding his side very firmly now, and the bleeding is abating. That is right, Miss Harz," as I dipped the lint in the tincture of Peruvian bark, and handed it to him, as I had seen Mr. Vernon do in a similar emergency. "Now the bandage — there! he is decidedly better," drawing a long, relieved sigh, "and Richard's himself again. Yes, he is coming to; opening his eyes, as I live; and he might not like to see me so near him. Miss Harz, you, against whom he has no such grudge, probably, may come here in my place."

As docile as a child to the directions of one I had so lately esteemed an enemy, I came to do Major Favrand's bidding. I took his place and, kneeling, pressed my hand above the wound firmly, as I had seen him do, while he retreated into the shadow, very wisely perhaps.

"Water," was the only word the sick man uttered, as his eyes unclosed for a moment, then drooped again in the languor of deep debility.

I raised his head gently, and placed the glass at his lips, and had the satisfaction to see him drink thirstily from the cup I held.

"Ah, that is refreshing to a dying man! I do not see clearly though. Who are you, and what is all this?"

"I am Miriam Harz," I answered, low; "you have been swooning."

"Oh, yes! I remember now, everything. The fire, the necessity, the ladder was too heavy, that was all. It has crushed me. But, thank God, you are safe! my darling! my darling!"

And for a moment his eyes were fixed on me, recognizingly now, it was evident. But again, as if exhausted, he sank away into languor and half unconsciousness, murmuring words that were incomprehensible even to the ear so strained to hear them. Suddenly he roused again, made an effort to rise, and sank back groping feebly about, as if blind or fainting.

"Where are you, darling?" he asked. "Give me your hand, let me keep it till I die for this is death! That dear and gentle hand, that you never would have given me but for this. So cold, so cold. But it might have been all so different."

"He takes you for some one else," whispered Major Favrand, who had again drawn near stealthily and on tiptoe. "His sweetheart, or wife, perhaps, who knows? He is delirious, that is plain. Oh, for Doctor Durand! Why has he not wings? My God! how wretched I am, to be sure! Such luck!" and again he smote his breast and literally tore his hair.

"Let me call you by your name at last, darling," the sick man pursued, unconscious of any other presence. "Miriam, my Miriam, before we part forever! It was hard, yes, hard. All things are gray and dark now, yet I know that your face is near me, your dear hand still in mine. One word — one word, and I should die happy. Speak it, Miriam."

"What shall I say to comfort you?" I murmured, bending above him and choking with suppressed anguish.

"That you love me! love me as I love you."

"Hear me then," I answered, solemnly, "I love you! love you as you love me. Live for me then, I entreat you," and I kissed his clammy brow. "Oh, Wentworth, live!"

Major Favrand and all the rest of the world sank out of sight in that moment of intense emotion. I was alone in the universe with him I loved — and God.

In another moment he lay before me, pulseless, breathless, lifeless, chill as the corpse that lies in its coffin for friends to gaze on ere the grave receives it. My shrieks filled the room. Major Favrand drew near appalled, trying to comfort me.

"He is dead," I cried, "Oh! merciful Father, that he should die for me! You have slain not one but two, Major Favrand. There lies the man I loved! Does it rejoice you to hear it? No, you need pour no cordials in his lips, never more to breathe, or speak, or live! He is dead; your work is done, and I am desolate."

"If I thought so, I would blow out my own brains, I believe, if only to satisfy your sense of justice, your Shylock nature. But I protest it is only a swoon. Since I found he was not delirious, I have not been half so uneasy. See here, Wentworth, Wentworth! old boy, dear old heart of oak, taste a little of this Cognac; it was never known to fail. The distilled tears of all the women in the world are not equal to a sip of this elixir vitæ! There, that is right! Now, another swallow. Don't push me away, man, don't; I'm the most miserable dog alive! Only get well, and I'll give you any chance you want, that is, if you regret throwing away your fire. That's been troubling him ever since, no doubt," nodding to me sagaciously. "The folly of it! Don't sob so bitterly, don't! There is nothing bothers a man in such a struggle, like hysterics! There, that's right, be still. There's a dear, good girl. See! he looks around again, looking for you, of course, and I am nowhere again, or rather one too many," gliding quietly away once more tipping back to say in the next moment: "Call me if you need me, I shall not be far off. Out on the gallery only, for a sniff of fresh air, and to see how the fire engine works." And he withdrew, with a delicacy that was inherent in his nature, in spite of his caprices. Nor did he ever afterwards, by word or sign, manifest any consciousness of the revelations made in his presence on this occasion.

When Doctor Durand came at daylight, his patient was out of danger, though weak and exhausted, and condemned in consequence of this attack, to do penance on his bed for another week.

Ten days later, just before he left to take up his temporary abode at the Refuge, Captain Wentworth announced with my permission, our betrothal, to the household of Beauseincourt, and to Major Favrand, personally, at my special request.

It was not for this purpose alone however, that this gentleman was invited to the presence of the man he had so recently served, whatever injury he may previously have inflicted upon him.

I had the satisfaction of seeing Captain Wentworth so far overcome the native stubbornness of his character, as to offer his hand to his quondam foe, with such expressions as became the occasion, and the man himself. Nor did he any longer refuse to make the reconciliation perfect that day over a joram of punch or claret, as Colonel Lavigne had proposed, and the whole affair was one of unmitigated satisfaction to all concerned.

As for me, I had at first that feeling which those who have suffered deeply so often know; a doubt as to whether the wing of the past, could ever cease to cast its haunting shadow over the present. I felt that I was too happy for permanence or my own deserts. But even this remnant of melancholy, or prescience, I succeeded in putting away at last, so as to realize my right to my portion of earth's enjoyments.

For a time all things seemed to smile in sympathy with my own felicity. Bertie was mercurially joyous in the reflection of my glad estate, and Major Favrand smiled and jested freely once more, as he had done in the days of our early acquaintance.

Joys and sorrows go in troops, the old adage says. And as if to confirm the saying, all pleasant auguries were in force at that bright season. The crops promised well in the "Lesdernier" settlement, and a letter from Walter Lavigne, gave notice of his speedy return, to the joy of his family.

The ell, with additions of Madame Lavigne's suggesting, was soon completed, and once more filled to overflowing by means of Uncle Quimbo and his "lumber-bus," and the still unshaken credit of her husband, with all imaginable household stores.

One thing alone, even money could not replace, nor any other agent, until time and nature chose again to work out their wondrous recuperative growth of slow perfection. The

superb Augusta rose, that had so long adorned and sheltered the gallery, and which no frosts of winter ever approached in that climate, to mar and stint, had met with an unexpected enemy in the destroying flame. It was burnt to the root; and we mourned it, as only a living thing is ever mourned. It was a daily theme of lamentation between Bertie and myself.

"My paint-box would have been nothing in comparison, I could have gotten another. But this rose has been growing ten years, mother says, through sun and storm. Does it not seem ominous, Miss Harz? Besides that, Walter loved it so much. I believe he planted it from a slip, when a child. How he will miss it."

"Not half as much as you think, Bertie. People who lead a roving life, care little for home details like this. But a cheerful smile from his little sister's eyes, he would miss, of course. You must guard against gloom this time, if you wish to see your brother happy."

"It is all very delightful," she rejoined evasively, "your engagement and his return. I was the only one in the house not surprised at your betrothal. Father held up his hands in mute amazement; mother exclaimed, 'Will wonders never cease?' Marion and Madge were charmed, though astonished, and have taken you into favor again. They have secretly hated you, until now, ever since I told them their beaux were both in love with you! Well, I shall ever believe Gregory *was*, though he is making up so meanly to Madge now; for he don't love her a bit. Such fine speeches! Men don't talk as he does when they are in dead earnest, do they? Wentworth, for instance. How little palaver he made. But I knew how it was, from the very first, with him. I knew it all the time, even when I made pretence about Miss Lurlie. This is the difference, though; you have twice the heart that he has, and so he has the advantage. He will sap your very life, if you don't take care, with the strength of your love for him. But he will be as well, and strong, and cool, and merry, as ever, and if you were to die to-morrow, he would just go to work, and submit! and say 'God's will be done,' in a hypocritical way, or perhaps utter that vulgar adage, which Marion says men are so fond of repeating; 'There are as good fish in the sea as ever were caught,' and go straightway to work, to get another true love"

"But I do not mean to die, Bertie, and as you say he is getting well and strong, we shall be very happy, I think."

"You had better get married at once, then. Something might occur yet to separate you," she hazarded, shaking her wise little prophetic head.

"No, Bertie not while a shadow of mystery hangs about me. I have told him there was something I could not reveal to him until shortly before my marriage day, which will be that of my majority. And he believes me and is willing to trust me, and wait six months if I like for my satisfaction."

"What a patient sheep," said Bertie, saucily, dancing out of the room, and laughing as she looked back.

She loved above all things to level a Parthian dart, and her arrow of wit and mischief was never off the string, nor her bow of satire entirely unbent. Those are the spirits that so often go through life misapprehended.

BOOK FIFTH.

"He comes at last in sudden loneliness."

BYRON.

"For oh! he stood beside me like my youth,
Transformed for me the real to a dream,
Clothing the palpable and the familiar
With golden exhalations of the dawn."

DEATH OF WALLENSTEIN.

"You find me here half stupid and half mad;
It makes no part of my delight to search
Into these things, much less to undergo
Another's scrutiny, but it so chances
That I am led to trust my state to you."

"What is your purpose, Aureole?"

"Oh! for purpose
There is no lack of precedent."

PARACELSUS.

"Why I can smile, and murder while I smile,
And cry 'content,' to that which grieves my heart,
And wet my cheek with artificial tears,
And frame my face to all occasions."

SHAKESPEARE.

"Hard deeds and godless have ta'en place, one erring
Drags after it, the other, in close suit."

COLERIDGE.

"Oh, that an angel would descend from heaven
And scoop for me the right, the uncorrupted,
With a pure hand, from the pure fount of light."

MAX PICCOLOMINI.

"The beautiful is vanished, and returns not."

WALLENSTEIN.

BOOK FIFTH.

CHAPTER XVII.

AS is so frequently the case with regard to anxiously expected guests, Walter Lavigne came at last quite unexpectedly.

We were sitting at the tea-table, I remember, on that rainy March evening, made memorable by such advent, when he stood suddenly before us.

Colonel Lavigne had finished his supper, and gone for a few moments to the library, to procure chessmen, I think, for a game with Mr. Gregory, — who played well, — when that bright and youthful presence gleamed upon us like an incarnation of sunshine. The father, I found, had not overrated the physical perfection of the son. He was truly an Adonis, for want of a better comparison.

His mother and sisters were at once clinging closely about their Walter in true feminine fashion, with tender greetings, and welcomes, kisses, sobs, and smiles, congratulations, and even questions. It was a perfect storm of rapture that died away at last into a lull of exhaustion, like all spasmodic excitements, whether of the outer or inner elements ; when suddenly the door opened, and Colonel Lavigne stalked in, with his ordinary solemnity.

By an oversight not unusual at a time of such excitement, he had not been summoned, upon his son's entrance amongst us, and there was a fresh surprise. In a moment, the two were locked in each other's arms, as I had never seen men before, and as it made my heart leap to see them now. Mutely and quietly they then sat down, side by side, on a sofa, with hands still clasped, content, as it seemed, in the

fulness and ecstasy of silence, which is golden, as philosophers have told us, while speech is merely silver.

Finally, Walter said in a low voice, and as simply as a child, "You are not looking well, father, how is this?" and again the fond arms were about the paternal neck.

Still that sweet, solemn silence prevailed on the part of the elder man, though the father smiled on the son, now, as if for all answer, with that strange, slow, sweet, occasional smile of his, so irrelevant to his aspect, that it looked like a stray sunbeam on a dreary winter's day.

The wife of Colonel Lavigne would have started, had she known that her husband, the man of bronze, could not speak, for tears, and that all things else sank out of sight with him, in presence of his Master Passion! For like many wiser men, he had set up this idol of clay, on its pedestal of marble, and adored it blindly, without a misgiving as to the durability of the material of which it was constructed, or the accidents to which in its very moulding, it was incident.

At last Colonel Lavigne said quietly, yet with the huskiness of emotion still lingering in his voice, "And you, on the contrary, are looking unusually well, Walter. Stronger, handsomer, than I ever saw you! This is my young Hercules, Miss Harz," suddenly recovering himself, "of whom I was boasting to you one day, I believe. Come, Walter, let me introduce you to this young lady; the children's governess, and Captain Wentworth's betrothed; Lieutenant Lavigne, Miss Harz."

And in his peculiarly explicit, yet formal manner, he went through the ceremony of introduction, bowing low, himself, as if in sympathy with the newly acquainted parties, at the utterance of each successive name.

"Father is so old-fashioned, or so green," whispered Madge. "The idea of his making *that* announcement a part of the ceremony of introduction!"

"Oh, it was nothing, Madge, only the truth. I did not mind it at all. Your brother will like me the better probably, for knowing my true position."

"It was a wise precaution," said Gregory, who in his noiseless way, seemed everywhere at once, and always caught the last word how or wherever spoken, "a necessary one perhaps to save poor Walter from a worse shipwreck than he ever escaped at sea — that of his youthful affections."

"One would think you had experience yourself of this kind," said Madge, suspiciously.

"Miss Harz is too merciful for that," was the careless rejoinder, "she always keeps a buoy, bobbing about on the waves of her attractions, just to warn off unwary mariners from shoals and quicksands; don't you, Miss Harz?" eyeing me confidently — defiantly. Then taking my fan, with inimitable nonchalance, he fanned himself slowly while awaiting my reply.

"I try to do so, of course, but some will not be warned." I replied deliberately.

"There now!" exclaimed Madge, putting up her pretty lip in a pouting way she had, "I knew how it was, long ago! I shall never believe a word you say again, Mr. Gregory, never!" and she turned away.

"Oh, she refers to Wentworth of course; everybody knows she accepted him from sheer compassion, after several refusals. Didn't you, Miss Harz?" fanning me coaxingly.

I could not help smiling at his audacity, as I replied,—

"I shall not satisfy you on that head. You must form your own conclusions."

"Honor bright, did you ever refuse me?" returning me my fan, broken, with a profound bow, but without an apology for its condition, "answer now! *When* did you reject me?"

"Never; who has accused me of such a want of sense or discretion, or suspected me of such a dearth of both good taste and compassion, which last you seem to think a governing motive with me?"

"The idea has obtained in some way and in some quarters, evidently;" he replied carelessly, glancing at Madge who still stood, with her face averted, turning the leaves of a magazine. "You must refute it as you only can, you know."

"I should not think the least bit the worse of you if she had," said Madge, sharply, without lifting her face from her book, "I should consider it a feather in your cap even, to have shown so much taste, — only — only I detest story-tellers!" suppressing a sob.

"I have no reason to feel wounded at your remark," bowing deferentially, smiling and glancing at me furtively, "since I am the embodiment of truth, if indeed truth ever

had a body, and have always been considered as essentially matter of fact, as if I had risen from a well."

"Oh, of course I believe what you say, since Miss Harz endorses it. Father says she does not know how to deceive, or she would if she could just for excitement's sake. But I believe she would not even if she could; she is as truthful"—pausing to think of a comparison, "as Jennie Deans herself." Gazing affectionately in my face.

"Thank you, Madge. I cannot lay claim to such crystalline veracity by any means; I do not even defend it. I have my concealments, which are virtually deceptions, perhaps; but I could not perpetrate a falsehood, I acknowledge, any more than I could steal or kill, and perhaps on the same principle."

"The idea being 'noblesse oblige,' you know," said Mr. Gregory, glancing at Colonel Lavigne derisively. "By the bye, is that the crest of your house, Miss Madge? I have taken up that idea."

"One of them," she answered, haughtily, "we have several."

I was amused at her impulsive stateliness.

"And your crest, Miss Harz? Or have you one? Two hearts with a dart through them, I suppose, symbolical of the name and your condition just now!"

"One wrong — one right," was my father's crest, or one of them," I said quietly — proudly, perhaps, in turn.

"I saw that once over a Jew's shop in Chatham street. One wrong, one right," he rejoined audaciously, "àpropos of coats, (not coats of arms, however,) it simply meant the vender was not a turn-coat or cheat, of course, but sold garments ready made — old clothes, probably, with one side 'wrong,' the other 'right,' just as represented. Very ingenious application, was it not? I forget the man's name, however," with a significant smile and bow, looking up as if trying to recall it, then glancing at me. "Something"—

"Harz, of course! That is your suggestion, I perceive. Don't you remember me behind the counter as well? A dark little girl, very watchful of the till; you have cause to recollect my vigilance, I fancy."

"I have indeed," in a low voice that escaped every other ear than mine. "I can never forget you, nor understand you either, I fear."

"The one as easy as the other, you will find I am by no means inscrutable," I answered carelessly.

"And you really love that man?" still in the same suppressed tones.

Madge was engaged with her brother just now, much to Gregory's relief, I saw.

"Your question is an injustice, Mr. Gregory, not to say an impertinence."

"Oh, you are evasive."

"Evasive? no! What right have you to question me at all? Especially when my own act declares my sentiments? It is you that are incomprehensible."

"Very transparent, on the contrary," he said, flushing, "as you have cause to know; very impulsive even, on occasions. I am afraid"—

"Let bygones be bygones, Mr. Gregory;" I said, "Believe me, I have never referred in any way to a moment's impulsive imprudence on your part; that I would fain forget. No, not another word! It is all 'sub rosa,' and will ever remain so."

"Ah!" drawing a relieved sigh. "But Wentworth will be my enemy, when he knows how I have estimated him. Make allowance for a little jealousy about that, however, should you see fit to repeat," speaking with downcast eyes.

"That I shall hardly do," I interrupted. "Besides, I cannot remember that you attributed to him anything radically wrong — all that man need care for with regard to the estimation of others."

"So that too is settled. Well, we shall get on bravely yet. A little confidence of this kind cements friendship."

"Confidence! You confound terms, I think!"

"Well, concealment, then, collusion, anything you please. By the bye, what do you think of this new importation? Green, greener, greenest. Which suits him best? Positive, comparative, or superlative? Handsome creature though, undoubtedly. Why the verdant one absolutely dropped briny tears on meeting with his mother and sisters. I heard his sniffle resounding above the joyous acclamations of the females of his tribe. And the rencontre between father and son was in the real melodramatic, Henry-the-Fourth, French style, wasn't it now? I wish you could see father Gregory meet me after long absence (I have no mother). It's 'how are you, Luke?' with one short grip of the hand, 'how's the pocket-book?' as the hand is withdrawn leaving my fingers tingling, and that's the end of the conference, unless

the volume in question prove flaccid. There is, however, not even an offer to fill the vacuum in case of a state of collapse, but a dry rejoinder of this sort to such communication. 'Get you back to work then, boy! I have no time to waste on loiterers; no money to bestow. What's a young man worth without a full purse of his own earning in his pocket? Be off — lose no more time," and that's the amount of the paternal hospitality, in the hall of the Gregorys."

"I shall accuse you of envy, if you laugh at family affection any more, after hearing this account," I said.

"I am envious, I confess, when I see women throwing away embraces on men of their own blood, especially when I know some of them would prefer the stranger within their gates;" and here he sneered.

"You are presumptuous, Mr. Gregory."

"Cela depend," he replied gayly. "There is no presumption, is there, in aspiring to what is attainable?"

"You shock, you offend me!"

"I can't help it. Girls will be girls, you know, all the world over, gentle and simple.

> "'Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,
> For love is heaven, and heaven is love.'

I didn't name any one especially, you remember, and shall not."

I turned away disgusted.

"Poor Madge," I thought, "how little you dream the truth; but you shall be fortified if I can effect it against all farther humiliation from such a source. Still how to proceed? Ay, there's the rub," and I sat down, sadly enough, in a corner to mark how her bright eyes swept the circle, ever in quest of that imperturbable coxcomb; how her color rose and came at his suave approach; how smiles forsook her lip when he talked with others and neglected her, as he frequently did for a purpose. How, in short, he held all the wires of her feelings and worked them mercilessly. They danced a quadrille, I remember, after we went to the drawing-room. I was the musician on the occasion, Bertie the prompter.

"Miss Harz," she said, eagerly, "did you ever see a Cobra Capello dancing? I wish you had eyes in the back

of your head you might observe one now. It is curious, really; a sight that beats any at Barnum's."

I turned to investigate, and recognized the idea at once, as I beheld Gregory advancing alone in the figure, self-poised, sinuous, spirited, with his peculiar soft, gliding motion and fixed, bright eye. It was the perfection of serpentine grace and serpent charm. It was the dancing of a charmer.

"It makes my blood creep," said Bertie, "I am afraid of him, but he fascinates Madge! She is like a bird on a bough under a black snake, he exerts such power over her when he goes by. If I were mother I would shut her up for a month in the 'Lumberbus,' and have her driven up and down all the time by Uncle Quimbo, so as to shake off his coils. The idea of a girl not yet sixteen, carrying on a desperate flirtation. It is preposterous!" drawing herself up with great dignity, while I played on absently.

"You must not judge your sister so harshly; let us hope it is nothing serious," I added after a pause.

"Oh, but it is! I saw him slip a note into her hand last night and about ten o'clock she went to the gallery door to meet him. I am sure of it. I was going up stairs on my way to bed as she opened the outer door, and there stood Gregory as large as life, if not larger, magnified in the moonlight, you know. The next thing will be an elopement! You'll see," nodding her sagacious head. "Marion is twice as discreet. She loves Mr. Vernon dearly, that is plain to me; but she would stoop to no secret measures. But mark me, she will never marry Duganne," with a prophetic wave of her hand, "never, while the stars shine."

Major Favrand interrupted us here,—

"You must have been weaving some of Bertie's gossip into your music, Miss Harz, for you have played 'Oh, its my delight,' twice too often. We will change the figure now, with your consent. Give us 'Mi Pizzica mi Stimola,' and the 'Market Chorus,' for the next. Come, Bertie, come and dance to make up the set. You are not needed here; besides, you are a very poor prompter."

And away they went together — the old, young man and the young, old maiden, both, by the bye (and to descend in the scale) unimpeachable dancers if nothing else. As to poor Duganne he hopped about like an elated kangaroo. Walter Lavigne footed it deftly as might have done Dan

Apollo himself. There never was such dancing as his and Bertie's since the days of Arcadian grace. Surely there was something Greek in that heroic strain of theirs.'

When I went to my seat, after the quadrille was over, Colonel Lavigne, to my surprise, came and sat beside me on the sofa and commenced conversation abruptly.

"You have seen my son, Miss Harz, now tell me just what you think of him."

"Think! Oh, I scarcely know just yet what to think; but one thing is certain and requires no thought at all. He is the handsomest young man I ever saw in my life, I may say with perfect sincerity, Colonel Lavigne. As to mere physical perfection, he rivals our ideas of Antinous, or Philip the Fair, or"—

"Alcibiades or Demetrius Poliorcetes that ancient realization of beauty," continued Colonel Lavigne. "Nobody knows how Antinous really looked, you know. He was only an ideal, I fancy, though said to be a real, live Bythinian. But we have close descriptions of the Athenian orator and Macedonian king; pictures even of their faces, mere charts we might better call them. It is a comfort, Miss Harz, believe me, a comfort as well as a glory to be beautiful! The man that moves gracefully, moves easily as well and with pleasure to himself. It is awkward people, the imperfectly hung and constituted creatures of God's hand, who have aching bones and stiffened joints, like mine. Ought not some allowance to be made for such unfortunates in every respect? Physiologists tell us that where the skin and the eyes are clear, and the teeth are sound and white, the hair soft and rich, there is health as well as beauty, vigor, therefore enjoyment. Amiability and a host of pleasant consequences follow. It is we ugly, ungainly people at discord with nature, who are cross, sick, and miserable."

A very fallacious argument in some respects certainly, which I could have destroyed had I chosen to take up the weapons of discussion, never at best very agreeable to me, so I only said quietly, by way of entering a disclaimer,—

"One might be, nay often is, as happy and as bright with a snub nose as a straight one, it seems to me, or a wide mouth as a Cupid's bow; and we see as well with little eyes as large ones, if not better, and walk as well with big feet as Chinese invisibilities, and"—

"Always in the opposition," he interrupted, smiling.

"One would think you were frightful, instead of a very pretty woman in your way, to hear you defending homeliness, which I take as a personal compliment, however," and he bowed. "If it had not been for my very ugly face, I should have been master of Bellevue to-day! My Cousin Celia was not enterprising enough to clamber over this promontory," touching his nose; "but don't tell my wife that, for the world; she would never forgive you nor me for the heresy. Favrand was esteemed a handsome young fellow, in those days, though you would scarcely believe it of him now, fat and fussy as he is. But I am better old than young, I fancy. Time sanctifies ruins, and mellows the harshness of hills and rocks, you know. I never knew but one woman magnanimous enough to get over my looks, and that was my wife, a pretty creature herself at one time, let me add," rubbing his long, lean hands together. "Quite a belle was Adeline Benôit."

"A pretty woman yet," I replied; "but I own I can see little resemblance to either one of you, in your son. Nor do I find him, as Captain Wentworth did, like Marion or Louey."

"No, he is '*sui generis*,' as you say; but his external recommendations are not one half with him. His disposition is the sweetest, sunniest, most affectionate, I have ever met with. There is no woman more tender, more devoted, more unselfish. He is courageous and gentle, impulsive and forbearing, indulgent and honorable. The most delightful combination of all the elements that the wise Creator ever fashioned in form of man. You will find too, when you know him, that he has no vanity, no self-consciousness; everything with him is natural, ingenuous, genial. He is not a very brilliant fellow, I confess, but has capacity enough to bear him on very respectably, with all his other attributes, besides a great deal of good sense and fine taste. Just the man to wear fortune gracefully, and make every one happy about him, if so endowed. And to fortune he has a right, yes, a right, Miss Harz. Do you believe in a higher law? Well, I do, and if I were an absolute monarch, it should govern. Ay, govern beyond appeal"—his voice fell here suddenly to low and broken tones. "In such a case, when Celia Favrand is laid in her grave, I would consign her monster, you know, to an asylum, and make Walter Lavigne heir of her possessions at once, instead of waiting ages or forfeiting everything by dying of old age before that wretch. It is too bad as it stands; too disgraceful."

"It is indeed," I echoed faintly. I knew by his brain-sick eyes, and their warped pupils, that we were near the maelstrom now, and our sails must be shifted, to avoid its current if possible.

"My God! how I have suffered of late," he continued, and he passed both hands through his shaggy, tawny gray hair, making it stand up fiercely, as he did so, and adding thus to his otherwise wild and wolfish expression. "Words cannot speak my sensations," after a pause, which I vainly strove to fill. "Everything at stake, and hanging on a hair, and here comes this splendid boy of mine to crown my agony, with his confiding affection. We shall all be turned out soon, Miss Harz, unless something very decisive is done," he added abruptly.

"I am grieved indeed, to hear you speak thus, Colonel Lavigne, but could not something decisive *be* done? Time granted is much in assisting a man in difficulties like yours, to regain his feet. You have rich friends who must espouse your cause. For their own sakes even, Major and Madame Favrand, besides others whom I know not of, perhaps."

"I would die, before I would owe an obligation to that ostentatious little man, that sweet, but senseless woman, wholly absorbed in self! Poor Celia, her career is almost ended though, I fear. I cannot blame her now. And what money she has saved, goes to her husband, of course. She has no right to divert a picayune of the principal. The leonine monster gets all that," speaking low; "but you know already, how it is all arranged. Ay! offence so rank against right and decency, that it cries to heaven! But as you say, one must submit to the decrees of fate, or be crushed in the struggle. It is inexorable! You taught me some very useful lessons that day, Miss Harz," derisively.

"I am glad to have served you, Colonel Lavigne, believe me," I answered quietly; "but I doubt the efficacy of my instructions. I cannot perceive that I made much impression by preaching to one whose convictions were already settled. I find you a poor proselyte."

"Come now, you judge me invidiously. You shall learn how submissive I am. But be discreet. This is a secret, so far," laying his long, lithe finger on his exaggerated nose. "I am about to play the part of Agamemnon; sacrifice my own child; it is the old story. Iphigenia must go to the shades to propitiate the winds of Aulis," he murmured low. "We

need them fair just now, to fill our sails for a fresh venture. Don't you think," whispering horribly, "it would be better to throw the monster overboard, lighten the ship in that way, rather than give our lamb to the wolf? Maginnis is a shocking brute and vulgarian, it strikes me, yet I cannot see my way any better;" and here he laid his hand feebly to his brow, and shaded his lurid eyes. "Better one than all, you know."

"My God! you are not thinking of that, Colonel Lavigne. It will destroy Marion; it will kill her mother;" and in the agony of the moment, I laid my hand on his long, bony arm, and shook him slightly. "Bear anything, first. Bankruptcy, poverty, what are they in comparison to the happiness of such a child, such a wife? Assert your manhood, Colonel Lavigne; throw off this incubus, and begin the world anew."

"Hush, hush! they will hear you," raising a warning hand, "and no one must know of this till Walter is gone. Time enough then! I have still three months wherein to decide. Three months! I will make them three years in the fulness of their events. I shall cease to be my own man after that. I shall be a galley slave from that time forth, wearing the brand of 'Maginnis, his mark' visibly engraven! And this is my all of life!" clasping his hands tragically. "Well, well, we are all the slaves of circumstance, the inexorable master," uttered with a deep-drawn sigh and ghastly smile; then casting his head down heavily on the arm of the sofa, he continued, "Ruin, ruin! It is a bitter word, Miss Harz, for a proud man to inscribe above his door-sill, 'Ruin within here! Poverty, sorrow and shame!' What a sign to hang up over the hostelry of Beauseincourt! Ha, ha, ha!" and he laughed low, and fiercely, and slowly, as baffled fiends might laugh.

I was shocked and startled. Yet I could not bear to break away from him while this mood lasted, nor to call to it the attention of others. Happily we were on a sofa in a recess alone, and Madame Lavigne was wholly engaged with her son, the young ladies absorbed in conversing with a knot of gentlemen, Laura and Louey were at the centre-table playing an earnest game of dominoes, Bertie had retired early with a headache, and thus we were unobserved, by unusual accident.

"All this is very dull to you, young lady, very revolting

perhaps; but bear with me for a season. 'Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh,' you know, the Scriptures say, to which you give full faith. Just now, there is none but you to whom I can open my heart disinterestedly. Wentworth, it is true, might be suggested, but a barrier has grown up between us, since these political differences came to the surface, which will never be broken down. I am not like Favrand; I cannot blaze one moment and be friendly the next. The want of congeniality is ever a settled obstacle with me. Besides I am a little afraid of him sometimes, I confess; he chills me with that austerity of his, with that fine polish."

"I regret this for your own sake, Colonel Lavigne. Captain Wentworth seems to me a very proper person to go to for counsel and consolation. He is so circumspect, so compassionate and *dis*passionate all in one. Then whatever he says is genuine; whatever he advises is just what he himself would do. Such counsel is so rare."

"I know, I know; still we have our preferences and prejudices in matters of this kind. Besides it is not advice I seek. I am impelled to speak to you, I scarce know why, unless it is that you are familiarized to me by habit and yet sufficiently distinct not to be merged in my trouble, as any member of my own family necessarily would be. Madame Lavigne, of course, must not be harassed just now. My daughters have no experience; my son — ah! I must not share my burden with him, on his brief visit of affection, nor cloud his joyous youth with these mists of misery which my own act must dissipate. Yes, it has come to this: some one must be sacrificed to save the rest. It is a necessity, such as occurs sometimes on shipboard: men eat each other, even, you know. Poor Marion!" and he shook his head dolefully. "I fear she must be our Jonas on this occasion."

"And if I were Marion," I said indignantly, "I would not be sacrificed to propitiate ill-winds. I would be no ship's Jonah. She can marry well to-morrow. She has the choice of Duganne or Vernon; the latter, preferable, of course. You, sir, can certainly take care of Madame Lavigne and your younger children, in some respectable way, with talents and connections like yours. Walter, is already provided for, and Madge and Bertie shall go with me, if you consent, — complete their education at my expense. After

that, if I know them, they will be no burden to you, for they will be competent and proud to support themselves!"

Again he slowly shook his shaggy and downcast head. "I trust it may never come to that," he murmured. "Nay, *It shall not*, 'noblesse oblige' you know; and yet, I thank you, Miss Harz," speaking louder and very fast, "thank you very sincerely. I feel that you are in earnest and most generous in your offer. But there are difficulties in the way, not now to be explained. Not that I doubt your ability at all, understand me; and again I thank you." And so saying, he rose in an embarassed way, and invited me formally to join a central group in which Major Favrand was enacting the role of "raconteur," an accomplishment in which he excelled, and a word for which we, in English, have no accurate rendition.

There is nothing like bringing the practical, face to face with the theorist, to put him to flight, as I had just proved. Humility, was no part of the lesson Colonel Lavigne had set for himself, however humiliation might be involuntarily at work for him.

Walter joined us soon afterwards, and I was convinced that his father understood his character perfectly, before our long conversation was ended. The truth, sweetness, and gayety of his manner and expression, were indeed as unmistakable, as delightful, and I could not wonder at the pride in, and affection for him exhibited by his whole family, especially by this eccentric yet devoted father.

He must have gone back to some knightly ancestor, as Captain Wentworth had suggested, for his attributes. His personal appearance was peculiar, and distinguished, as well as beautiful. He had the golden brown hair, and clear, violet blue eye of an Englishman or German of the highest type, though the eye-lashes that swept his cheek, and the brows that spanned those eyes, were black as night. This contrast in itself was singularly beautiful, and not inharmonious. His features were finely moulded, his mouth crimson and fresh as a girl's, and sparkling with splendid teeth, dimples, and smiles. His complexion was fair and clear, brilliantly ruddy on occasions, but usually healthfully pale. The skin itself was as fine as ivory in the grain, and resisted exposure (as such material always does) to sun and storm. He possessed his father's height, with his mother's accurate proportions, and something superior to either, in port and

finish. Altogether, a more beautiful or radiant specimen of youthful manhood than Walter Lavigne, had never crossed my path or filled my artistic eye.

We were good friends from the first. The very fact that I was the betrothed wife of the man he loved so well, was a passport to his affections. But this was not all I believe, that bound us in the sacred bonds of friendship. In those bright days we spent together, we found many points of union, one of which, on my part, could not be acknowledged. He had served with Norman Stanbury, knew and loved him well, and had heard him speak of his passion for Evelyn Erle, and his trust in her affection (all cast to the winds now, I knew, by her marriage and forgetfulness of him), in terms of unmeasured enthusiasm.

I found that he had a tendency to cultivate the friendship of just men older than himself, common to those affectionate and feminine (though not effeminate) natures, which assured me of his virtue and humility both. He had proved his manly courage in the estimation of Captain Wentworth, it may be remembered, in the Bay of Odessa, when he risked his life to save that of a simple seaman of whom he knew nothing, and without losing prestige after such an act could afford to appear dependent and docile.

It was delightful to witness the affection those men of such different ages and views bore one another. Walter Lavigne hung on Captain Wentworth's words as oracles, and shared all Vernon's euthusiasm about him, forming in turn for this "umbra" of his friend's a strong and sudden attachment.

From Gregory he shrank instinctively, and I found that Madge was on her guard before him, for he could ill have brooked the idea of such a marriage for his sister; far less the degradation of the capricious attentions of a person he intuitively despised.

I was convinced of the frivolous nature of Gregory's devotion, when I found how he shunned contact with the young protector of his sister's feelings and honor, and marked his shallow pretexts of late for avoiding Beauseincourt. But Madge was satisfied in some way, through notes clandestinely conveyed to her, I feared, but by whom I could not conjecture. She considered Gregory a persecuted and injured man, a martyr, sacrificing his own inclinations to screen her feelings and secure her happiness and

only waiting a favorable turn in the tide of fortune, to throw himself openly at her feet. In the meantime she lived on his occasional presence, and his pen and ink professions, became her bread of life.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THERE were mineral wells of noted efficacy not far from Beauseincourt, to which Doctor Durand ordered Bertie for a fortnight in the early part of April for her health, which was perennially delicate at that season. It was settled that Walter and Marion were to accompany her. Sylphy was to go along to "take kear ob de young ladies," as she expressed it, there being a settled conviction in the minds of devoted domestics in the South, that but for their ministry and oversight, the white race would speedily come to nought.

Madge and I were left to comfort one another and Madame Lavigne as best we could and to keep Laura and Louey in order; children in whose very sweetness lay strange strength to harass and disorganize. For of what avail is authority that can be defeated by a pair of twining arms and dewy lips full of the fresh fragrance of childhood?

Little girls! The very words are enchanting to me. Boys by no means possess the same charm for my spirit. They are flat and common-place in comparison. Their simplicity is apt to degenerate into boobyism; their gayety into turbulence; their wit into impudence. Tops, hoops, marbles and fish-hooks are ignoble in comparison with the graceful and subtle toys sacred to girlish childhood. The images of wax, or porcelain, or moulded wood, skilfully painted and adorned with fragments of fine lace, and silk and muslin; the tiny tea-set; transparent as sea-shells; the small work-boxes, with their fairy implements of steel and mother-of-pearl or ormolu, so daintily used and carefully cherished; the Liliputian baby-houses, with their wondrous

appointments of kitchen, chamber, and drawing-room, garnished and kept with housewifely precision, all still have a hold on my fancy that I cannot put away with my womanhood, as St. Paul affirms men do the toys of their infancy! I am not so sure of that, after all, most reverend teacher.

Men still bring each other to "taw," and roll fantastic hoops occasionally, alias hobbies, before them, until suddenly they fall flat and the game is over; and cast out baited hooks for simple fish to catch at; and spin giddy tops of enterprise and transitory enthusiasm, which run down and lie quiescent when the feverish impulse has died away, as did the toy of boyhood; and carry out, in divers ways, to the very end of their lives the sports of their infancy and childhood, just as women are said to do their vanities and vexations.

Laura and Louey were essentially womanly in all their childish ways, and I sympathized with their recreations, as I did with their studies, which first I found greatly to the advantage of my influence in regulating the last.

Louey had a wonderful ear for verse. You might trace her through the house by her rythmic murmurs, sometimes recited, sometimes chanted, as the mood seized her. Her declamation was surprising for one so young. Laura inclined more to mathematics, music, and the languages. As to Bertie, we all knew by this time that her penchant was decidedly for "Shakespeare and the musical glasses," for as desultory as the conversations thus described by Johnson's "inspired idiot," were her inclinations, that idiot whose slightest sayings charm us yet, while the wise platitudes of his master, have degenerated into common-place before the increased enlightenment of mankind. For genius is like sea-water, salt wherever we may dip it, and ever free frominsipidity; and, like that, originality will keep through ages, but learning alone waxes stale when it has ceased to be wonderful. Every educated man knows now nearly as much as Johnson alone once knew, the "literary leviathan," as men of his own time called him. Goldsmith was but a little pilot-fish in those days floating in the wake of the great sea-monster. For moral energy will take the lead of genius itself in the conduct of life, while life endures, and in this we know how sorely deficient that child of whim and fancy was; nor can we find, seek as we may, a grander type of man with all his faults, than was the inveterate old talker,

tea-drinker, sloven and grumbler, book-worm, pedant, pedagogue, and monarchist, Doctor Samuel Johnson! A digression here, coutrary to all good intentions!

There are passages in his journal to me, more touching than all the sentimentalities of Sterne or La Martine, or the theories of Rousseau.

The flesh-and-blood strife of spirit with matter, of the worm with the demigod, of the creature with his infirmities, all laid in deepest confidence and humility at the very feet of his Creator, in utter unconsciousness of a possible public! Truly, the ostrich burying his head in the sands! What dignity like to virtue, even in its dishabille, or a pure soul, in its utter nakedness.

Peace be his! and when the end comes, may we see him face to face, rejoice in the touch of his rough, benevolent hand and teach him in turn, who taught so much to others, the strange discoveries that have enlarged the sphere of humanity since he went to rest, despite his credulous incredulity.

"If you could only see what a poor figure you cut," he said, it may be remembered, to the gentleman who described to him the earthquake at Lisbon and its consequences, "you would stop trying to impose falsehoods on honest men," or words to that effect.

Yet he half believed in the Cock-Lane ghost, and trembled at his unconscious infringement of the fast of Lent; so terrible a penalty to his peculiar organization!

What would he say to the report of a newly arrived spirit in his peculiar sphere, who should tell him of the steam-engine, the telegraph, the universal march of mind? Nay, the spiritual medium-call so akin to his Cock-Lane ghost; and as yet so imperfectly investigated?

Is it likely your Goldy would listen with interest, embrace the theories comprehendingly, and be called a blockhead for his pains — for his was genius which looked into the life of things with the eye of intuition and which belongs, therefore, to no peculiar time or place?

But Doctor Johnson, who represented the age in which he lived, alone, and was the embodiment of ability, not genius, would rise, no doubt, in an incredulous rage, and storm at the bearer of such information, in Paradise itself, nay, thrust him thence, if possible. A truce to irrelevance.

I missed my little room-mate inexpressibly, and Laura, a

staid child of ten years old, poorly replaced her. Madge kept Louey in her chamber to comfort her, during Marion's absence. Thus the house was very quiet in this division of a confederacy that managed to make itself felt when associated in the shape of all manner of merry noises. Laura's weakness, however, took the shape of an accordeon, which she pulled at from morning till night, absolutely dragging from its unwilling vitals, such agonizing melodies as Jean de Navarre might have perpetrated at the bidding of her unfeeling father when Henry the Fourth was born, if we may believe old chronicles, rather than feminine experience.

I have an unusual antipathy to all machine music, from a hand-organ up, with the sole exception of the highest order of musical boxes, with their fairy, tinkling trills and rippling, brook-like murmurs, that always remind me of pigmy pianos, very perfectly played on by fairies, or fantastic apes. Had the music of the spheres been ground out by the angels, it could not have moved me deeply; and it is reasonable to suppose that it must have been purely mechanical, if it ever existed at all, a sort of grand Calliope performance, in accordance with mathematical laws. An instrument must have a soul behind it, to be worth a straw in my estimation and it is doubtful to me whether the accordeon be not a soul-punisher, as well as an ear-torturer; the wail of an imprisoned "*âme damnée*" seems so distinct in its weird groanings, its droning symphonies.

To escape from Laura's oft-repeated long-drawn "Draw the sword of Scotland," I went one day to the parlor, hoping to enjoy an hour's quiet on one of the cushioned sofas. The room was darkened, as it usually was at the hour of noon, and the hall leading to it was also closed and dim, so that when I passed lightly through the last in order to reach the drawing-room, I startled its occupants with my unexpected presence.

A tall and slender form rose from the shadowed sofa in the recess, as I approached, and a hand was stretched forth gropingly in greeting. At the same time I heard the voice of Madge from the deep chair hard by, in a fluttered tone, that did not escape my practised ear, or fail to arouse my suspicions.

"Miss Harz, do sit on the sofa by Mr. Gregory. He is just making a little morning call."

"So I perceive, in spite of the shadows which effectually

conceal faces, but still reveal outlines. Keep your seat, Mr. Gregory ; I came with a book, supposing the parlor unoccupied. I will have a little more light, if you please, and sit near this window. Do not let me disturb you, I beg." Then after a pause, "Madge, does Madame Lavigne know that Mr Gregory is here?" opening the blind very deliberately.

"No, I did not think it worth while to notify her, as she seldom comes down stairs until evening, except at meals, you know, of late. I would have sent for you, had I not supposed you were engaged. You keep your room so closely, usually, between school hours," with a faint simper.

"And would now have done so, but for Laura's accordeon. Paganini's father's soul, imprisoned in his violin they say, was nothing to it. But it gives her such pleasure to play on the gallery by my room that I cannot bear to check her. So I came away, rather than do this, with my fascinating volume, which will engross me, I fear, to the exclusion even of your society," inclining my head slightly to both of them, as I spoke.

"What are you reading, Miss Harz?" asked Mr. Gregory, in a low tone of voice, that implied distinctly, "I wish you and your book a thousand miles away."

"Eugene Aram," I answered ; "strangely enough, I have never met with it before. Have you read it, Mr. Gregory?"

"Yes, I read it in the North, when it first came out, some years ago. It is a poor affair, I think," very sententiously.

"I cannot agree with you. It is full of concentrated power, it seems to me."

"Bulwer is pretty well played out, I suppose, for there are evidences of failure about him, already."

"I feel on the contrary that he has not yet reached his zenith, by any means. That he has still much greater work to do, than he has done. He is a man whose soul will grow with years ; outstrip his intellect itself at last, which is gigantic. This is all he wants to perfect him."

"Do you separate soul from mind then, Miss Harz? I confess I cannot understand that idea at all," superciliously. "I cannot descend to such puerilities."

"Nor can I explain it. But I *feel* the distinction. A person may have a great soul, with a moderate understanding, I believe, and indifferent culture ; and possess a won-

derful mind, ability, talent, attainment, and not soul enough to be worth the saving! That is strong language, Mr. Gregory, but you now know what I mean," and I looked at him fixedly.

"Lord Chestefield was right," he muttered in a contemptuous tone, "when he asserted that there never was a woman who could reason."

"What does *mere* assertion amount to in any case?" I asked contemptuously in turn; adding, after a pause, "would you like an illustration of my theory, Mr. Gregory? Example is the next thing to reason, you know; even more self-evident indeed. I know a case in point, and so do you, perhaps; shall we compare notes?"

"Oh, I suppose you would give Byron or Napoleon, I know your opinion of both; but we see with such different eyes, Miss Harz, you and I."

"We do, indeed. But I find I shall never be able to read here, in this tide of controversy. Do you stay to dinner, Mr. Gregory? If not, I will say good-morning and seek a refuge elsewhere."

"No, he will not stay to dinner," said Madge, eagerly, "he promised Mr. Vernon" —

"Oh, that is sufficient,' I interrupted, then pausing a moment, I added gravely, "Mr. Gregory, I shall be pleased to see you alone for a few moments when you call again. I have a little business with you, which it may be just as well to settle as soon as possible."

"I am at your service, Miss Harz; command me at any time; now, if you will," rising respectfully. "I expect, though, to return this evening to Beauseincourt with Captain Wentworth."

"This evening will do in that case. I have but little to say, only a request to make and shall not monopolize you long. Will you not bring Mr. Vernon with you? Ask him from me to come this evening. It is so long since I have seen him. I shall esteem it a favor."

I felt that in Marion's absence there could be no objection made to this invitation of mine on the part of Madame Lavigne, and I knew how solitary the poor fellow was of evenings, when his companions left him to the Refuge and its screech-owls.

"I will deliver your message punctually, Miss Harz," replied Mr. Gregory, ceremoniously, and thus I left them.

A few moments later, Madge joined me.

"Miss Miriam,', she said, anxiously, "I have reasons for wishing that Mr. Gregory's visit here to-day may not be mentioned to the family. Promise me you will not."

"What reasons have you, Madge? No very good ones, I fear," shaking my head, sorrowfully.

She covered her face with her hands.

"It is better than going out in the woods to meet him, is it not?" she said, resolutely, looking up suddenly, her face and neck crimson. "If he cannot come here, I will go there, I am determined!" speaking defiantly, with extended hands. This outburst was totally unexpected.

"Margaret Lavigne, you surprise me! Would you indeed be guilty of such impropriety?"

"Yes, if the tyrannical interference of others be permitted. My happiness is at stake, and at any cost, I will see Mr. Gregory."

"I am so grieved to hear this! I have feared it though, for sometime. Has your mother then, forbidden you to receive his visits?"

"Father has, which is something even more serious. He went to Mauriceville to-day, and I took advantage of his absence to—to—let him come. The truth will out, you see, but that is all. I declare to you, this is all, Miss Miriam."

"Was this call then an appointment, Madge?"

"Why should you ask me, Miss Harz? What can it matter to you whether I receive Mr. Gregory casually or make an appointment?"

"Only this, dear Madge; one shows coincidence on your part, the other leaves it in doubt. You must not entangle yourself with this man, my child, he is not worthy of you or he would ask you to do nothing clandestine. He knows your feelings well enough by this time to approach your father openly on the subject. He has behaved very ill, I think."

"And this is what you have to say to him?"

I will not deny it. I shall give him my views sincerely; I shall then have done but my duty."

"Since Walter came, everything is changed, every one has turned against me! Even you, Miss Harz, that I always thought my friend," (sobbing). "I feel myself persecuted, forsaken" (sobs). "There is but one person on earth" (sighs and sobs), "one person who lo-loves me, and he—he is a target for the scorn and hate of the whole family,"

then suddenly — in some swift change of mood, clenching her hand and shaking it in the air — "I wont bear it— I'll elope if they don't take care! I'll never give him up, never, never, never!" reiterating the last word in the wildest hysterical excitement. "Walter Lavigne has proved himself a deceitful viper! It is every bi-bi-bit his doing" sobbing convulsively), "and I wish the grave contained unhappy me."

Of course this tempest had to have its way, before I could venture to interpose again. Madge had cast herself down on the couch and gave way to a passion of tears, and very gradually indeed, the storm subsided and a low, intermitting whimpering and sniffing succeeded the first violent paroxysm and finally died away altogether. When all was calm again, I ventured to renew the subject of discussion.

"Madge, I ask you as a disinterested friend, are you or not engaged to Mr. Gregory?"

"Not exactly, Miss Harz, but I expect to be."

"Has he said nothing to you of marriage?"

"Oh! he is too poor, and I am too young to think of that yet. He will '*come forward*,' after a while — that is his very expression; and in the meantime he begs me to have confidence in him and keep his counsel. He does not want the matter talked of at all."

"This will never do, Madge. You are compromising yourself deeply with a stranger. You must be more prudent, my dear girl, or you will lose the respect of your friends. Promise me to see Mr. Gregory alone, no more, until he can 'come forward,' as he calls it, openly."

"Don't speak of his visit here to-day, then; on that condition"— she hesitated,—

"Well, Madge?"

"I will agree to see him no more at present, except in the presence of others. Yours at least, I mean, for the next three months."

"Agreed. You are a girl of spirit and principle, I know. I shall trust you;" and I kissed her cheek.

Her heart was relieved by this determination I saw, for she threw herself in my arms and wept silently for a little while, then looked up cheerfully again and smiled in my face, placing her hand in mine as a mute pledge.

She was very pretty sometimes, when her features, somewhat too small and undecided, usually, were lit up with

expression. Beautiful as Marion undeniably was, I preferred the face of the younger sister for a constancy. She was a fair compromise between the erratic brilliancy of Bertie and the conventional calm of Marion; the "*juste milieu*," which is always most satisfactory. Altogether Madge was an attractive and most lovable girl, full of sweetness, gayety, and intelligence.

"That evening Captain Wentworth came, accompanied by both of his aides. Vernon looked dispirited, I saw at once, in Marion's absence; Gregory out of humor; Captain Wentworth happier and handsomer, I thought, than I had ever seen him. There was but one cloud now on my horizon. This I would try and disperse.

While the latter conversed with Madame Lavigne, with whom he was again in high favor, and Vernon played at écarte with Madge, I withdrew to a distant sofa with Mr. Gregory, whose moody brow and sullen eye attested his unwillingness to attend me.

"Mr. Gregory," I began, "I have thought for some time I would take advantage of my privileges here and ask you some leading questions about a dear little friend of mine just now, somewhat unduly under your influence. You are paying Madge very decided attentions, though not very open ones. What are your intentions?"

"Really, Miss Harz, I am not prepared to answer such questions from such a source. Miss Margaret Lavigne, suffer me to remind you, has a mother, a father, and brother quite able and willing, I suppose, to protect her. This innovation is extraordinary. Or perhaps the young lady herself has authorized this proceeding?"

"Your suggestion is altogether erroneous. Margaret Lavigne is superior to any conspiracy or manœuvre of the kind. Her only fault, as far as you are concerned, is being too magnanimous. She has, as you astutely observe, a mother, in delicate health, a father, greatly harassed by his own affairs, a brother, on a brief visit to his family, not supposed to be occupied in observing side play (for I perceive you are very wary of falling under his notice); and I, who although a stranger, in some sort occupy a somewhat responsible position in the household of Beauseincourt, have thought it best to speak, thus quietly to you, before farther attention should be pointed to your proceedings. A cause of pain to others as this must prove.

"I warn you resolutely, Mr. Gregory, to desist from your clandestine attentions to this young girl, and to 'come forward' at once with regard to the matter on hand or let it drop entirely. I use your own expression, I believe, in making this suggestion. You must not, shall not trifle with Margaret Lavigne while I can lift a warning voice to save her or point a finger towards her defender."

"Captain Wentworth, I suppose!" he observed sneeringly.

"No, sir, not Captain Wentworth. This is no concern of his — need never be. I shall not even communicate with him on the subject. But unless you declare your intentions to me at once with regard to Margaret Lavigne, I shall deem it my imperative duty to warn her father and brother of your course, and leave to them the settlement of their family honor."

"You are very determined, Madam, very exacting, I must say. Were Miss Lavigne your sister instead of your pupil"—

"I should act differently, I acknowledge," I interrupted, with blazing eyes. "I should tear her from your presence as I would free a rose from the touch of a poison-vine or a bird from the subtle power of a serpent. I should use bolt, and bar, and key, if needful, to relieve her from your unprofitable presence. I should command you, at your peril, to approach her no more, and enforce my penalty 'sans merci.' In such a case as that you have imagined, there should be no conditions affixed to your intentions, no possible compromise suggested. Ours would simply be war 'a l'outrance.'"

"What have I done, Miss Harz, to forfeit your respect, to gain your emnity to this point?" he asked, bitterly, falteringly.

"Done? One act alone suffices as an example. You induced Madge to meet you alone at night, when you knew the family to be occupied with cards and conversation, and unobservant of her movements. You have written to her, clandestinely; you approach her surreptitiously; you postpone your proposal indefinitely. Is this fair, is this manly, is it honorable? You are a man of the world, she an inexperienced school-girl, singularly innocent and confiding. Common justice demands an explanation."

"You shall have it," he said, haughtily, "though it is not

to you it is due. I mean no injury to the young person in question. I cannot marry yet; should the fancy *endure* on both sides, not otherwise, I shall claim her some day as my wife. Yet it is a privilege I would willingly surrender in view of a loftier aim, a hope I no longer dare indulge, a passion enduring as the sun! You understand me This is poor substitution at best; why should you grudge it? Let me conduct matters in my own way; all will be made clear at last."

"No, Mr. Gregory, you must either declare yourself openly and speak with Margaret's parents at once, or quit 'Lesdernier.' You have your option. The rest I leave to Walter Lavigne." After a pause, I added, eying him resolutely and folding my arms, "My part in this affair is ended here."

"Let us compromise," he said, slowly, "I see you are determined. I agree then to your proposition; I will come here no more until I see my way clearly, or only when invited by the heads of the house. I have an engagement in this vicinity that I cannot forfeit without pecuniary loss such as I am ill able to sustain. Let this matter rest and you shall have nothing more to complain of. Captain Wentworth has requested me to be his groomsman in August. Try me until then and let what has passed remain quiet between us two. You are right, I suppose, after all."

"I am glad to find you reasonable," I answered, "and I frankly accept your compromise. I have spoken with Madge, and convinced her of the folly and impropriety of her course, I think. Now nothing remains but to carry out these promises and good resolutions on either side."

I rose from the sofa well pleased at such a result.

"She, too, has promised then?" he asked eagerly, "tell me what her agreement is."

"Yes, she is in bonds for three months' submission to my counsels. By that time, you will have determined, I trust, either to cut the Gordian knot of your difficulties or to look matters fully in the face."

"I do not fear to face the music," he said, doggedly, "Favrand understands and appreciates me, I fancy, if none of the rest here do. He who represents the family honor, at least, it seems. The Mars of this establishment."

"Walter Lavigne is quite able to dispense with his inter-

ference," I replied, quietly, to his sneer. "His courage has been proven to Captain Wentworth's satisfaction."

"Ah! that is enough for you, certainly!" he exclaimed.

"Let us drop this matter now, and discuss it no more;" I rejoined. "It is a delicate one, involving both happiness and honor. Should you remain true to your declaration, I shall feel rebuked, Mr. Gregory, for having mistrusted you As it is, we are again friends, as the word goes, I hope."

"Friends at *least*," he said, coldly.

"I use the word in its most general sense," I rejoined. "For Captain Wentworth's sake alone, I wish to esteem you, if possible. You are so closely linked together in association and interest that I can but hope I have done you injustice, Mr. Gregory."

He rose reluctantly and we joined the *tête-à-tête* (rather than interrupted it) between Captain Wentworth and Madame Lavigne. Later Major Favrand and Colonel Lavigne came in together from Mauriceville, with papers, books and local news. And a cheerful family supper concluded the evening so inauspiciously commenced.

Madge was never gayer than on this occasion. Her spirits overflowed like a generous bumper of sparkling wine. It was evidently a relief to her true nature to be done with shams and concealments. Gregory, too, was singularly brilliant. I had never seen him appear to greater advantage than on this occasion; and the general mirth was sometimes quite as uproarious as good breeding ever suffers it to be.

As we went upstairs, I heard Louey, who had been allowed to sit up later than usual on this occasion as her sister's room-mate, murmuring one of her poetic measures iu her peculiar fashion of soliloquy.

"What is it now, Louey?" I asked. "Is it still 'The Blind Boy's Petition,' or 'The Angel of the Rose,' or 'The Mushroom Girl;' what are you repeating this time? Not 'Little Barbara Lethwait' again?"

"No, only 'Tiger, tiger, burning bright,'" she replied, "I always think of it when I see Mr. Gregory."

"Where did you learn it, Louey? I never heard of such a piece before. Let us have it by all means," said Madge.

"Oh, it is so long; I learned it out of one of father's big black books filled with pictures. There is a tiger above this piece, with bloody claws, oh! so terrible! (I believe

Bertie painted it one day,) tearing a fawn." And before we separated for the night the child delivered herself of this strange morceau, which I afterwards found attributed to the painter, Blake (the Shelley of artists), and as applied by her to Mr. Gregory. I give it here, singular as was this application.

"Tiger, tiger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand and eye
Framed thy wondrous symmetry?

"In what distant deeps or skies
Burned that fire within thine eyes?
On what wings dared he aspire,
What the hand dared seize the fire?

"And what shoulder and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
When thy heart began to beat,
What *dread hand formed thy dread feet*?

(These last words spoken with extreme awe, which set Madge off in a twitter of suppressed mirth.)

"What the hammer, what the chain,
Knit thy strength and forged thy brain?
What the anvil, what dread grasp
Dared thy doadly terrors clasp?

"When the stars threw down their spears
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did He who made the lamb, make thee?"

I thought Madge would have died laughing at this singular application of a singular poem to Mr. Gregory. One that few children would have fancied.

"Poor Mr. Gregory," she said at last, wiping her eyes that had overflowed, from merriment this time. What a fearful impression he makes on some simple minds to be sure! How was it he struck you as so tigerish, Louey? He is very lamblike, I think, on the contrary."

"I did not say he 'struck' me at all," drawing herself up indignantly, little literalist that she was, "I only said, he always reminded me of that piece, particularly 'Tiger, tiger, burning bright,' at the beginning; then about the 'dread feet,' Sister Madge."

"Louey, you are crazy! That is the most absurd expression I ever heard of in the whole course of my life. How can any tame creature have 'dread feet?' As to Mr. Gregory, he has very nice, long, narrow feet, cased in beautiful

shoes, always, and with an instep almost as high as Bertie's."

Still the child shook her head solemnly.

"He seems to me to have 'dread feet,'" she said, "they come and go so softly, and they are so limber, like his hands. That is the way with the tiger, the book says."

Madge sat for a moment surveying Louey.

"Miss Harz, did you ever see such a family of oddities as ours in the course of your whole life, from father, down?" she said at last. "Don't you think that showman, Barnum, in New York, could make a fortune carrying us round as 'The Huguenot Exiles?' Do write a book about us and put us every one in, Bertie at the head. Make Walter (our *handsome* brother), your hero, of course. Dear old Walter! I am so sorry to have spoken crossly of him to-day. He is only fastidious, I know, and makes the mistake of thinking all of his poor little plain, poverty-pinched sisters, sovereign princesses, only to be approached on bended knee!"

"No, Madge, he simply regards them as ladies, bred and born, and demands that they shall be honored by all as such. But let me tell you at once, that Mr. Gregory agrees to your terms, and I think the better of him for it."

"So do I, Miss Harz," mournfully.

"A little ordeal of this kind, Madge, is very salutary for future happiness sometimes. Have patience, dear, all will still go well, I trust," and leaning forward I kissed her brow.

Her eyes filled, she bent down her head.

"But Laura and Louey, I see, are sleepy. Good-night, good-night, dear Madge," and there were embraces interchanged and we parted for the night.

Ah, never, never more might peace or rest so perfect reign at Beauseincourt, as descended above its roof on that balmy, starry eve of spring! Fate leads us blindfold at nightfall to the edge of the abyss of the morrow, and we know not what one step may bring to pass!

CHAPTER XIX.

I RECOLLECT the eventful morning well, that succeeded that happy evening, a clear and breezy one early in April, with every tree alive with birds, every shrub and vine bright with odorous blossoms, and filmy webs, gemmed with dew, stretching like veils over grassplots, and verbena-beds, and violet patches, as if to shield them from the fast-approaching, fiery sun.

I had awakened at dawn after a night disturbed by dreams and nervous fancies, and witnessed the conflict of the waning moon and rising sun as they met on the threshold of the day, the saddest spectacle to me, I scarce know why, that nature presents to the eye and heart in all her varied repertoire. To return to bed and sleep was impossible after such a sight and the sensations it awakened. I bethought me of the book I had left unfinished the day before as a resource against ennui. I resolved to throw on my wrapper and go forth in quest of a pleasant nook to read it in, until the time to think of breakfast and school duties should simultaneously arrive.

As I descended the stairs, a sudden wish to see Bellevue and its lovely refreshing fountains gilded by the rays of the rising sun, took possession of me. Espying Ossian bounding to and fro in the yard (across which little Sip was lazily creeping with a pair of boots dangling from his arm, whose idiosyncrasy of length and gauntness it was difficult to mistake) I determined to make that noble brute, as I had often done before, the companion of my ramble, as well as dauntless protector.

I had left my book on a table in the library, lying face downwards. It was a careless thing to do, though the binding was indifferent and the paper poor, of the novels of those days; yet I should have chided one of my pupils for such a fault, therefore thrice inexcusable in me, and I re-

buked myself for inconsistency as I crossed the gallery and made on my way sage resolutions for my future government. The book was precisely in the same place in which I had left it, I saw from the staircase as I descended. It lay on a table near the door which stood open so as to reveal a portion of the interior of the room to my view, as I paused on the central platform and looked down. There, too, (I could not be mistaken although his back was towards me) stood Colonel Lavigne near the mantel shelf, busily engaged in scooping out the seeds from a cantelope melon, the aromatic fragrance of which filled the room and was very appetizing as I approached the door, an approach which did not disturb him in the least, absorbed as he apparently was in this very matter of fact occupation.

Not caring to attract his notice I lifted the book softly from the table on which it lay, perceiving as I did so that he stretched forth his hand to the mantel shelf and took from it a small phial of white powder, a portion of the contents of which he sprinkled upon the cut melon, slowly and carefully corking the bottle thereafter and placing it his vest pocket. So seeing I fled away bewildered.

The proceeding seemed strange until I reffected that this phial might contain sugar or salt, equally in use, I knew, as a preparatory addition to this fruit, by those who fancy nature can be thus improved. I had not suspected him of gourmandise before, with all of his specialties. I saw now that he had carefully tended the hot-bed that contained the melons, for the gratification of his own peculiar palate and not for the sake of others as Bertie had fancied; he was even less philanthropic it seemed than she imagined.

Ten minutes later I had forgotten the very existence of Colonel Lavigne, absorbed as I was, in the contemplation of the enchanting spectacle presented by Bellevue, the snow-white, stately mansion with its surrounding shrubbery and lofty magnolia trees in full and magnificent blow, relieved by the column of sparkling water, that, after rising to a height of thirty feet, fell in a graceful shower of prismatic jewels back into its marble basin, dashing its foaming spray over the figures couched beneath it as it did so, and thus lending them a strange, phantomlike vitality.

I had never seen Bellevue since the day on which I had met Colonel Lavigne by the plank enclosure, and beheld the frightful creature on whom all this beauty was wasted.

But now I paused by the iron railing in spellbound admiration of the lovely, fairy-like domain and dwelling, lying so obscurely apart from all others, that it reminded one of those palaces described in the Oriental romances, which the Prince Incognita always chances on so opportunely in the wilderness. The place to my senses was ever like a vision.

Immediately opposite the iron gate of entrance, long closed with its lost or missing keys, of which I have before spoken, and which Bertie, it may be remembered, had fancied she had seen standing open on one occasion (a gate somewhat higher than the fence but otherwise undistinguishable from it), was a tangled bower, belonging to the grounds of Beauseincourt in which occurred one of those old, moss-grown, stone benches that here and there tempted the wanderer to repose in that domain.

The dusty, sunny road ran between this nook and the grounds of Bellevue, about half way between the two, and the view from the intensely shadowed place across this pass way was singularly sweet and suggestive. I had just drawn myself up, squirrel fashion, on the stone bench, somewhat dubious of placing my feet in the long, rank, and it might be, reptile-haunted grass beneath, and leaning back against the arm of the settle, had composed myself to read Eugene Aram, a book recommended to my notice by Colonel Lavigne himself, in a most comfortable attitude, when I became aware that Ossian had forsaken me.

Five minutes later, while my eyes still roved in quest of the dog, his master passed, as swiftly and silently as a shadow, along the sunny road, dressed for hunting, in his suit of gray velveteen as I had before beheld him in the self-same spot, his game-pouch slung from his shoulders, apparrently well-filled already, and his gun lying as usual in the hollow of his arm.

To my amazement he paused at the iron gate, and after looking carefully around him, drew a key forth from his pocket, fitted it in the rusty lock and pushing back one of its leaves entered the grounds. A moment later I heard the long, low, partridge call, that had so strangely stirred the incubus before, and rising to my feet impulsively, beheld him leaning against the railing, throwing out morsels of cantelope from his game-bag, as I have seen countrywomen scatter corn to their poultry from a contrivance similarly suspended. No, I could not be mistaken! Crouching at

his feet was a small, female figure, eagerly groping in the grass for the morsels he threw out and greedily devouring them! I observed them preathlessly.

At this crisis Ossian came bounding back along the road from his chase of a rabbit, probably, and suddenly paused before his master, forgetting, greatly to my relief, the newer in the older allegiance. Colonel Lavigne perceiving him, looked anxiously around and came out of the enclosure, closing the gate after him; but so suddenly and nervously, that the key, loosened by the jar occasioned by the clinking latch, fell in the grass; the long, thick, stubble of that region. After a few moments spent in impatient search, it was temporarily at least, abandoned to its concealment by its possessor, who swiftly departed as he came. Colonel Lavigne was gone, almost as speedily as he had come, and with the same shadowy silence; and with him had disappeared Ossian,so that I once more found myself alone, but scarcely in a condition for self counsel or action of any kind.

The report of a gun at a safe distance first roused me from my stupor. With a lightning flash came conviction of the meaning of this singular scene, and that in the library, and that impulse which with me was ever coincident with emergency, nerved me to the fulfilment of a repulsive, and it might be, dangerous duty. At any risk I must, I felt, do what could be done to save the unconscious victim of so much perfidy and dark design, from her impending fate.

In another moment my hand was on the latch of the gate. Scarcely daring to look before me, I pushed it open and entering the enclosure began hastily to grope for and gather up the fragments of cantelope and cast them one by one as I found them, across the fence into the palmetto patch without. Thus employed I nearly stumbled over the prostrate form of the old negro woman I remembered to have seen, with her patchwork, on guard before, whose swollen countenance and loud, sterturous breathing, now bore witness of her condition — drugged to insensibility! Beside her in the shape of a black glass flask, such as negroes usually carry, lay the evidences of her own weakness and the turpitude of another. That other. Whom? All this was not long after sunrise, at which time only, be it remarked, Colonel Lavigne had gratuitously informed me that this poor wretch was permitted, because of its eastern exposure, to

come to the front of the mansion and bask in the sun's early rays, secure at such season from observation.

I knew that the monster I had before seen, was close beside me, as I resought my task, observing me narrowly perhaps, with every instinct awakened by appetite; but I persevered with averted face, in gathering up the fragments of what must have been several severed melons, until attracted by the growling and mumbling noises she made, I became aware that she was already biting those she held in her hands and evidently rejoicing over them in her fatuitous fashion.

Then I turned and again beheld that sickening sight, the lion head on the human shoulders, glaring upon me like a dreadful mockery of carnival or a painted dream of Fuseli's. But I could not hesitate. Life and death were at stake and the diviner impulse overcame the mortal one; that intuition of the intention of the Deity which impels all who love *him* to try and do his will, however repugnant to human inclinations, or uncertain of success.

I snatched the slightly bitten morsels from the hands of the wretched effigy, and hurled them far away while still continuing my search for more, and turning determinedly from the phantasmagoria (as it seems to me in remembrance) of that revolting spectacle, too hideous for realization, even in memory.

I had nearly completed my task, when with the alacrity of a cat, the thing called Marcelline suddenly sprang upon me and I saw the loathsome aspect close to mine and met the glare of the infuriated animal eyes within a few inches of my own. I closed my eyes, while a faint sickness overcame me, like that of a coming swoon, from the reality of which I was saved perhaps, by the fixing of her sharp, white teeth in my hand, thrilling me as they almost met, with unspeakable agony amd horror.

I succeeded in removing the loathsome jaw (not without difficulty, however), and thrusting the wretch aside, I seized a piece of melon which I had dropt during her attack, and which she caught at wildly as I passed. Then I pushed open the iron gate, and staggered forth just as the dog came bounding joyously through it, leaving the horrors of hell behind me as I passed out. Surely had any one seen me so emerge, I must have appeared a guilty and conscience-stricken wretch, instead of a being intent to spare and to

save, and fain to escape with life. As the gate clanged after me, enclosing Ossian in the grounds, I had the satisfaction of seeing him shake and drag the old negro woman to her feet, as if instinctively he felt by so doing he was serving the cause I advocated.

From my covert opposite, to which I had again resorted as a temporary refuge until my strength should return, I marked the negress seize the idiot by the arm and like one walking in sleep, swaying and tottering as she went, proceed mechanically with her toward the mansion. Still uncertain as to what more to do, I lingered, for I could not yet bear to abandon the creature to her own devices, when greatly to my relief, I saw one of the old gardeners advance from behind an angle of the house and stop in front of the pair, then lead them gently onward.

My part was done! I could, I ought to go no farther, in consideration of the innocent, in mercy for the guilty. I would perish (I felt so then,) before I would be the cause of bringing down shame and sorrow upon the heads of my benefactors. Yet I could not conspire with crime, by suffering it to succeed before my very eyes (unconscious of the truth as these were or might have been supposed to be), without an effort to thwart and avert it.

An hour later, when my strength and composure both returned to me, and when the first agony of my wound was abating, I took my solitary way homeward. Something gleamed in the grass as I passed the gate, but I did not stoop or turn to pick it up, walking along weakly and wearily. Later Ossian bounded after me with a leather string in his mouth from which dangled a key, that so recently dropped I could not doubt from its peculiar construction. A thought occurred to me; I took it from his teeth and dropped it in the depths of my pocket, as unwillingly and loathingly as though it had been a tiny serpent, yet with a fixed determination. "Let me guard him for their sake," I thought. "Thank God! Bertie, the ever observant one, is not near. But what must be the consequence of all this? I tremble for the revelations of the next few hours. Strychnine or arsenic, it was one of these I am certain, and the fate of the rat or the crow is yours, poor Marcelline!"

I arrived at the house faint and exhausted, for the sun had begun to pour down his fiery rays by that time, and

the shock I had received had shaken me in every way. Besides these, the slow throbbing of my hand from which blood continued to ooze slowly, was becoming intolerably painful and nature was yielding fast beneath the agony. I needed the rest and respite of my own secure chamber.

The aromatic smell of coffee, and the bustle of servants crossing and recrossing the courtyard warned me that breakfast was in readiness, as I approached the mansion ; and as I ascended the stairway to my room, I saw Colonel Lavigne calmly reading his newspaper in the library as was usual with him at that hour seated at ease and quite composedly in his great Spanish chair.

"Was it all a dream, then?" I put my hand to my burning brow, "a figment perhaps of my own disordered and sun-struck brain ; or had his purpose been purely a benevolent one, and was I conjuring up phantoms 'from the vasty deep,' of the mystery with which my own mind had clothed him, caught from the ravings of a sick, delirious girl?

Mortifying as is ever the consciousness of having entertained unjust suspicions or of having overacted in any way, I caught at the momentary suggestion of my judgment with an absolute faith and a feeling of relief and devout thanksgiving for my own infatuation destined, alas! to be too speedily dissipated! I had time to bathe and bind my hand and compose my hair, before the shrill sounds of the breakfast bell, rung on the lower gallery by the impetuous King (for the slow, steady, strident sound Jura elicited from its brazen tongue was widely different), called me from my solitude and compelled external composure.

The family was already assembled, when I entered the dining-room. Colonel Lavigne in a ceremonious way, remained standing until the last inmate of his house was ready to be seated, but Madame Lavigne was already in her place dispensing coffee, and met me with her usual benign smile and graceful greeting.

"You had a long ramble this morning, Miss Harz," she said cheerfully, "Jura tells me you have but just come in. I think you must be compiling a work on botany. Have you hurt your hand with a thorn? I see it is bound up."

I was saved the necessity of replying by the interpolation of Laura who hastened to say,—

"She paints all the flowers she can find, mamma! I have found that out, lately. I saw a large pile of flower-pieces up

stairs on the table; but I did not hurt them, Miss Miriam, indeed. I only looked at them very carefully. Some of them are just like life. You ought to see them, mamma!"

"You are mistaken, Laura, in attributing all of them to me. Most of them are Bertie's handiwork; she has much more talent as a flower-painter, than her teacher. I always liked heads better, myself." Such was my mechanical response.

"Bertie has really great versatility of talent," said Colonel Lavigne, blandly, "and is certainly most fortunate," with a bow in my direction, "in her instructress. Will you take a bit of this broiled chicken, Miss Harz, or do you prefer the fish? I can recommend this trout; it is from the upper Cohoot where the water is clear as crystal. Walter sent us down a hamper last night, of his own catching, amply packed in ice too, a luxury we rarely see in the interior."

"Not any fish or chicken, Colonel Lavigne, I thank you, A morsel of the ice that surrounded the fish would, however, be most grateful to me, if it can be spared. I am singularly oppressed this morning."

"King! Jura! wash some ice immediately, and bring it to Miss Harz. True to your Northern allegiance, I see! Louisa, suppose you have some cream frozen to-day, with what remains, for a variety. There is enough, I think."

"Certainly, Colonel Lavigne; I am glad you suggested it. There is an ice-house established at last at Mauriceville, Miss Miriam, and we can, on emergencies obtain it, I suppose. Such a comfort as it is in fevers, you know. Colonel Lavigne, do you know whether it was filled last winter, or was it completed in time?"

"I never thought to enquire;" calmly adjusting his napkin, "I care so little for ice with our contrivance for procuring cool water by evaporation. Besides I cannot shake off the superstition of my forefathers, that it is unhealthy, and even a cause of shortening life. I confess that on this account, if this alone, I prefer water in its pristine condition. This consideration ought, if true, to prevail over everything else. Life! what is there like life and its preservation?"

And he rubbed his hands and looked round with an expression of bland self-gratluation, very irrelevant from certain proceedings that I had witnessed, or dreamed of having witnessed, I could not be certain which, on that same morning, but such as I fervently prayed might prove not to have existed at all save in a delirious and sun-warped fancy.

Time wore on, and a few hours more, I felt, would decide everything. Then came the sudden rebound of thought and conviction succeeding this hope. Would, under the most favorable circumstances, the intention, after all, be thus brought to light? Who should say what might have been the result, but for my providential interference? And in one sense, would not this interference, in itself, if nothing fatal occurred, rise in my mind ever after in confirmation of my probably unjust suspicions? Could I ever again divest myself of this chimera, strive as I would, that had possessed my brain? Was any compromise possible. I had put it resolutely away an hour before, what brought it back so fiercely, freshly now?

"The questions we put to ourselves silently, are often loudly answered," saith the Chinese proverb. A thundering knock at the front door at this instant challenged all attention, and a moment later, Major Favrand entered the dining-room, booted and spurred, with his riding whip in one hand, his slouched hat in the other, evidently equipped for a journey.

"Good-morning to every one," he said, "I have not time to individualize. I merely came as I passed, to see if Doctor Durand was here in attendance to-day. We want him at Bellevue immediately."

"Is Cousin Celia ill?" asked Madame Lavigne, with real concern in her voice.

"No — no," hesitating a moment, then lowering his voice, he replied, hastily, "it is Marcelline. She has been eating green melons, we fear, in quantities. That old wretch, Sabra, was drunk this morning and inattentive, and suffered her to stray in the gardens no doubt, where cantelopes are being forced for her benefit; not fit to eat yet, however; we found them torn up by the roots and broken. But I must be gone," striking his boot impatiently with his whip. "Nothing will satisfy Celia but that I should ride myself in quest of Doctor Durand. Plague take the old roving, pill-driving Bedouin! He is as hard to catch, on occasions, as the Frenchman's flea."

"He has gone to Savannah, I think," said Colonel Lavigne, quietly, wiping his mouth with his napkin, preparatory to leaving the table, then laying his knife and fork in that exact order into which he never failed to bring these implements, when he had concluded his repast. "Doctor

Lucas rides in his stead, you know, whenever he is absent, and his house is much nearer at hand. But stay here, Favrand, or go you home to Celia, and let me send King. He knows the way across the country, which shortens the distance considerably, and is, you know, in every way, a perfect Mercury."

"I will follow your suggestion," said Major Favrand, promptly, "besides, I am not at all well, myself, to-day; have a headache, which is rare for me. By the bye, that was a hard ride we took yesterday, Lavigne! I don't know how you stand fatigue so well, without turning a hair or collapsing a muscle. You are an older man than I am by several years, yet you sit firmer in your saddle."

"A man of leather, remember," replied Colonel Lavigne, smiling grimly," with no flesh to bruise or shake to jelly. The saddle suits me as well as a rocking-chair, it is only rainy weather that knocks me up when I am riding; I never mind exercise, but the damp makes my bones creak like rusty hinges."

"Well, for my part, I think horseback riding was only meant for slaves. The Chinese idea of dancing, you know, Miss Harz. By the way, why is it you find everything I say so ridiculous? I can't bear to be laughed at. Do cease. It embarrasses me. It is an infirmity of mine!" and affecting peevishness as he spoke, Major Favrand paced up and down the room in assumed displeasure, glancing ever and anon at me with ill-feigned, comic indignation.

"But to be laughed with is different, you will perceive," I retorted, merely for the sake of a reply, for my heart lay like lead in my breast, and the smile he pretended to resent, was a cold affair of habit, no doubt, purely mechanical. We get in the fashion, sometimes, as all know, of laughing at whatever falls from the lips of a professed wag, and the inclination becomes at last an irresistible matter of mere association, conventional.

"And now I must go back to Celia," he said, after hearing Colonel Lavigne deliver very clearly his impressive directions to King. "Be in a hurry, my good fellow!" tossing him at the same time a bright half-eagle. "Is there not another son of Galen near Le Noir's landing? Give me his address, Lavigne; I have forgotten his Esculapian cognomen. Dr. Jones — yes, thank you. I will take your advice, go home and send for him at once. But I trust not

ters may change for the better before either of them get to Bellevue."

"To which I devoutly say, amen," observed Colonel Lavigne, solemnly, folding his hands and bending his shaggy head.

"How was Marcelline attacked?" asked Madame Lavigne, drawing Major Favrand to one side, to receive his answer on the eve of his departure.

Involuntarily I caught the words "Cholera Morbus, Asiatic Cholera, Celia's opinion," agitated between them, and finally a bottle of some potent camphorated, pepperized mixture was brought forth, by Aunt Felicité from the storeroom by the order of her mistress, and placed confidently in Major Favrand's hand.

"A wine-glass every hour while the retching continues and until natural heat is restored. Bottles of hot water, blankets and mustard poultices, and unremitting friction with the hand, and I think she will be relieved without the aid of a physician!"

Such were Madame Lavigne's directions and opinions, with which Major Favrand, apparently well satisfied, took his departure. When I crossed the corridor, on my way to the school-room (after applying some laudanum to my still painful hand, by Aunt Felicité's advice), I saw Colonel Lavigne, pacing up and down the gallery in his usual leisurely way, and I paused one moment to observe him. He was picking his teeth and perusing, or seeming to peruse, an outspread New York journal, which he held before him.

What was I to think of this man? Fancy itself stood still appalled! Conjecture was confounded! Such coolness was the very sublime of guilt, or the fairest proof of innocence! But how should I decide? Alas! who but God alone, would ever penetrate this mystery?

Never had school-room duties appeared so irksome before, not even when Captain Wentworth lay ill and wounded in the library; for now physical pain was added to restless anxiety, and the result was, to make my duresse unendurable. At eleven o'clock, an hour being still wanting to the time of my emancipation, I determined to throw myself on the generosity of Madge.

"I am suffering very much," I said, "my dearest girl, and must go to my chamber now for awhile. I feel wholly unequal to my duties. Will you hear the French lesson

this morning? And afterwards read the rest of the 'Tale of Trials,' to the children, which I promised to read to them to-day as a reward for their good behavior? The book is there on the table, one of Mrs. Opie's, you know; and now I must leave you to attend to my wounded hand, taking your assent for granted."

"Let me dress it for you, Miss Harz," said Madge, affectionately. "Those thorn punctures are very severe sometimes. Perhaps a piece of the thorn may have remained in the wound."

"No, it was not a thorn wound, Madge. That was your mother's suggestion, if you remember rightly, which at the moment, I did not care to refute, knowing how much it would agitate her to know the truth. I have been bitten."

"Was it Ossian, Miss Harz? Oh, I hope not!"

"No, a very inferior animal. But I will not give up the offender, so ask me no more."

"What if the dog were mad, Miss Harz? Do tell me and let me see father about it. I am sure he would have it killed instantly. Was it one of the hounds? Their name is legion, and I never could see the use of such a tribe, just to bring down an occasional deer or squirrel! Do answer me," and her kind arms were around me persuasively.

"Not another word, Madge, on this subject, to any one, if you wish to please me. I will ask Felicité to examine the wound, and if necessary, Doctor Durand, when he returns. But I would prefer you would not mention it to your mother, or father either. Or to Laura or Louey. It would make me nervous to have it discussed. It is a whim of mine, perhaps, yet promise me!"

"Oh, certainly not, Miss Harz, if you object. Do go and attend to it now, however, and repose. I have noticed all day how ill you looked. I never saw you so pale. I will do my best, I promise, to replace you."

I went to my room and sent for Felicité. She came to me promptly, and with certain unguents and soothing applications, much relieved the anguish of my hand, which on first inspection she pronounced to be a "dog bite."

"Mout it have been dat little poodle of Miss Marion's, I wonders, Miss Mirime?

"No, no, Felicité, a strange creature altogether, one I never saw but once before, never shall again, I trust. Don't ask me though, nor mention it to a soul. No dog shall die for me."

"You has a mighty feelin' heart, honey. I seed dat from de beginnin'. But if de dog done gone clean mad, it is your bounden duty to give him up to jestice! How does you know but what he might bite Mistiss herself, nex' time? Dis a mighty small print of dog's toof anyway. Major Favrand's 'talian greyhound mebbe, wat followed him to-day. But you better blebe dat dog's not gwine to suffer for any Christian, white or black! De Major dun packed him home before him on de hos, when he foun' how de cretur 'zausted hisself, follerin him ober here, and dey do say he feeds it wid his own hands on cakes an' cream and dat's more 'an he was ever knowed to do for his own poor ijut, Marcelline," with a deep-drawn sigh.

"By the bye, Felicité, how is that poor thing, have you heard anything from her since morning?" I asked as carelessly as I could.

"Yes, honey," shaking her head dolefully, "as bad as she kin be to live. And masta, dey sont for him an' he done gone ober, wid all sort of powders to try and sabe her life. He's a berry good doctor hissef, is master and mussiful to black and white. And now I'se got to go mysef. It takes my bref away to trot about so, it does indeed, chile! Sabra (dat's her special nurse, a mighty fine ole collud lady as ebber you see, chile), she's sick herself and dey wants a more sperienced hand dan dey've got to sabe der lives, wid all der gran' dressed sarvants in libbery. I'se tryin' to make up my mine to go, kase if I don't mistiss 'clars she's gwine hersef, an' it's all masta could do to 'strain her, an' you know dat disobegence like dat would be equal to alimony."

What Felicité meant by this expression I did not stop to enquire, but something very impressive, no doubt, for she continued shaking her head sometime afterwards and muttering to herself incomprehensibly, turning before she left the room to beg that I would take charge of the medicine chest key, which her master had left with her until his return, as something might be needed before she came again, and it was a "mighty 'ticular duty."

"Ef its de real Asiatic cholera," she paused to add, "I has little hope ef returnin' at all Miss Mirime; for it's as catchin' as de chicken pox, I does belebe in my heart," and as she passed through the door, I heard her soliloquizing on the fearful nature of the task before her.

"Comfort yourself, good Felicité," I thought, "*this* is not an infectious disease, even if mortal, whatever cholera may be, you are safe from contagion."

Thus did my first conviction recur and thereafter cleave to me eternally!

I was not well enough to join the family at the dinner-table or take a mouthful of food. A cup of green tea that Madge brought to me herself, was all I could receive. Her mother too, was nervous she said, and had taken a "tea-dinner," a feminine resource not unusual on such occasions. Her father had not returned, and Felicité had gone over to help nurse Marcelline, "which it seems cold-hearted in me not to do," said Madge, "but mother will not hear of it. Do you know I have never seen that poor wretch, nor has Marion, though we have some idea of the truth; and you know how Bertie was affected by the sight. She has never been the same child since, as you know, nor, I fear, will ever be again."

"You could do no good, Madge; only embarrass matters. But I very much fear your mother will finally go. Her ideas of a neighbor's duties are very Christian and self-sacrificing."

"I fear so too, Miss Harz. When Walter was sick with congestive chills, Cousin Celia left everything to come and aid mother. She is singularly devoted to him, calls him her son sometimes; I suppose because he is to inherit Bellevue when all of them are dead; though father always declares the prospect of succession is blue, and that the poor imbecile will outlive us every one. Wouldn't it be a strange Providence if she were to die after all, Miss Harz?" clasping her hands. "Oh, I am afraid it is very wicked for me to feel as I do about it! But what blessings her death to-day would bring to Beauseincourt!"

And the unconscious girl cast up her eyes to heaven in mute summary, no doubt, of all the good that such a change might bring to pass, her own happy marriage among the rest.

"Yet I do not wish for it, Miss Harz," she resumed, a moment later, "I would not let myself do this, for I believe, delicate as she is, the loss of that poor deformity would destroy Cousin Celia. Besides, it would be murderous to hazard such a wish, and even for the thoughts I have expressed and entertained, I feel that I shall suffer in some way. Oh, God, let me cast them out from this moment!"

And with clasped hands and prayerful lips Madge dropped her head upon my pillow, in deep silence, while the purifying process went on.

"There, I am better now! God will forgive me, I trust," she said, looking up serenely, "I have entreated him."

"We cannot always prevent wrong thoughts from intruding, but it is, as you feel, our duty to expel them as quickly as possible," I rejoined, "and shut the door of our hearts in their faces ever after."

"Yes, that is all we poor, weak mortals can do," murmured Madge.

"And that is much," I answered, solemnly.

It was evening when Colonel Lavigne returned to Beauseincourt, having passed the day at Bellevue in ministry of some sort, very harrowing to him, doubtless, if his haggard face — of which I had a perfect view when I handed him the key of his ever carefully-locked, sacred medicine chest — was any indication of his mental condition. The poor wretch was still alive, he told us, but incurably ill, Doctor Lucas said, with what he pronounced "Asiatic cholera," the very name of which ghastly visitor sends consternation into every neighborhood. The other physicians in attendance, we heard later, coincided in his opinion, and fortunately for one person concerned, at least, the man whose cool sagacity would have put them all to fault, was in Savannah, and not to be obtained until the grave should have covered up all vestiges of crime or accident; so fate ordained.

For strive as I might, that idea, like the spot on the key of Bluebeard, recurred persistently. For a little time, and under the pressure of will or reason, it would depart; then suddenly reappear in all its pristine distinctness, a spot of blood which no Fatima friction could efface for more than a moment, fixed and indelible as it was, in the very life of things by conviction's self.

That night I sat at the board once more face to face with the poisoner! I marked him well! and gloated on his sufferings, which strong as he might be to subdue them, were imprinted on his aspect. I was truly Rhadamanthine on that occasion.

An evening of wind and rain succeeded the beautiful day, which had been one of such singular suffering to me. Captain Wentworth (prevented by the storm), did not come, as

was now his custom to do every evening. I was thankful for the respite. I could not have shaken off my burden sufficiently to have welcomed him as I ever desired to do, nor could I have shared it with him without dishonor to the roof that sheltered me. This I keenly felt.

At midnight the storm abated, and the moon rode large and full in the vaulted heavens. A faint shimmering of sheet lightning on the distant horizon was all that remained to indicate the character of the atmosphere or to recall the recent tempest. The stars came out clear and countless, and a faint, fresh breeze swept sighing among the trees. Lying in my rigid watchful way when laboring under excitement, in my bed at night, I heard the rapid horse hoofs of an approaching messenger, and the hasty summons at the door of the gallery for "Colonel Lavigne." But this time he went not forth alone. His wife accompanied him at the earnest solicitation of the dying Celia, exhausted by her unceasing vigils over that poor imbecile, from whom all others shrank appalled, and the appeal was one that the compassionate nature of Madame Lavigne could not resist.

In the morning Felicité returned, having assisted Sabra to perform the last offices for the doomed and monstrous idiot, but Colonel and Madame Lavigne came back no more until the dire tragedy was ended, and Celia Favrand, unable to resist a second shock, had yielded up her frail being to the Conqueror and followed her wretched offspring to the shadows of death.

The blow which she had sustained when her husband fought the duel with Captain Wentworth had been the entering wedge to her dissolution. Doctor Durand had foreboded then, that any further painful excitement must prove fatal to her, doomed as she already was to early death; and when he returned from Savannah, hastening home in answer to the entreaty of Major Favrand, he was only in time to join the cortêge of friends who bore to their last resting place (the burial enclosure at Beauseincourt, where all of the name of Lavigne slumbered) the beautiful and loathly forms of mother and offspring, enshrined alike in their ebony coffins palled with velvet, the first lying in wax-like perfection of loveliness to the last, strewn with flowers, for all beholders to gaze on; the last, shut away from human observation by the shielding hand of compassion, if not of affection, the veil of a father's pride and delicacy.

The grief of Major Favrand at the death of his wife bordered on distraction, and for a time friends feared to leave him to himself and the devices of his own anguish.

But when I saw him, a fortnight later, but for a little additional gravity of mien, a suit of sable, and the long crape weepers he wore on his hat and arm, I should not have suspected his desolation, nor its cause. He had regained his equilibrium, so sudden and mercurial is the reaction in natures like his own, however deep the underlying impression. A wound may heal healthily and speedily, and yet leave an abiding scar, very tender to the touch, and from such necessity carefully covered from sight and sensitively guarded.

That Major Favrand had truly loved the angel who had walked with him through life, and felt himself uplifted and half-redeemed by such companionship, I well believe. But there were not wanting many to aver that his chief cause of distraction lay in the loss of Bellevue and his other estates all forfeit now by that strange, unjust prevision to the heir of Beauseincourt.

When Walter Lavigne left home to go with his sisters to the wells in the mountains, at the head of the Cohoot River, where he passed his time in placidly fishing, he was a poor young "passed midshipman," in the navy of his country, a lieutenant only by courtesy, the son of a decayed gentleman, tottering on the verge of ruin. When he returned to Beauseincourt he was the richest man of his age, in Georgia, having it in his power to build up his house and family and bear joy and prosperity to the heart of the father he loved so profoundly. Such was the strange order of his destiny!

But he still wanted two months of being of age, and all acts of his must be deferred until after that period in order to legalize them. He yearned for the day when he might attach his signature to deeds that would emancipate his father from the grasp of the usurer, and give to Major Favrand in fee simple, one of his rice plantations. Such were the chief of his cherished schemes, but he had a thousand minor ones, all based on the happiness and enjoyment of others.

His mother and sisters should make the tour of Europe, as they had long desired to do. They should have laces, silks, jewels, *ad libitum*; pictures, books, fine furniture, musical instruments; and Beauseincourt should rival Bellevue in the lustre of its adornments, without and within. I was

included in all these arrangements, he declared, if I would suffer it, as his sister's friend and if it were not an insult to offer pecuniary aid to such a man as Wentworth, he would gladly bestow on him also an estate! (magnificent sultan that he was.) But he would make no promises as to Gregory, and meant evidently to put him on trial, before sanctioning his engagement with Madge. So willed this young potentate of Beauseincourt, whose impulses and instincts went so nobly together.

There was but one person in all the band of sisterhood, who seemed to look coldly on the fortunes of the beloved brother, and whose restless and lustrous eye roved evermore as if in quest of some reality she vainly sought to find in a maze of surrounding fiction. More silent, more repressed than I had ever seen her, Bertie walked as if in the centre of a dream, alone in her family.

"She is more ill than they think her," said Captain Wentworth, as he observed her fluctuating color, her dilating pupils, her panting breathing after the least exercise and remarked her unusual silence, "more ill than they know of, Doctor Durand or any of them. She has disease, I fear, either of the heart or lungs."

"She has scented blood from afar," I thought, as I heard his comments. "She suspects remotely, but dares not conjecture or enquire, and she is wretched. May God be with her! He alone can aid!"

CHAPTER XX.

IT was on the day after the funeral at Bellevue, a ceremony which Walter and his sisters were summoned home from Cohoot springs, especially to attend, where Colonel Lavigne acted the part of chief mourner (crocodile "par excellence"), and principal pall-bearer (a mockery that I alone in all that crowd of spectators recognized, but which doubtless bore with it its pang of punishment to the Judas of the procession): it was on the very day after this solemn and impressive pageant, that Madame Lavigne herself, fell suddenly ill, and was soon

pronounced in imminent danger by that experienced practitioner, Doctor Durand.

Thirty-six hours of anxiety and suffering on the part of her whole household succeeded this declaration of her physician, during which his own assiduity was constant and unremitting, and the agony of Colonel Lavigne so intense as to endanger his reason.

He locked himself in his library and lay upon his face in grim despair, as Laura and Louey reported, who had stolen a glimpse of him through the glass door from the gallery, in fear and trembling, as nervous people peep at show serpents, in their crystal cases.

He refused all nourishment until assured that nature had at length vouchsafed relief to his wife's sufferings; though her condition was still a precarious one he knew. He then stalked grimly forth, unshaven and dishevelled as he was, to call for a crust of bread and goblet of wine for all refreshment.

"Masta do act so curous," said Sylphy to me, "and hab dun so ebber sens we cum from de Cohoot wells! I does believe Miss Celia's def, cum mighty nigh 'ranging his brains. Jura says (an' he's bin masta's waitin' man, ebber sens dey bof growed up) as how — but wen you waves your hand to me dat way, Miss Mirime, I always stops right up. You has less proper cur'osity dan any white person ob quality I ebber seed. Dere' s strange talk about, do', I tells you! A talk of sperrits walkin' an' dat iron gate standin' open agin of nights, what Armand Lavigne locked up so long ago, wen he fell out wid Masta, an' de talk was de key was in his han' wen he was laid in his coffin and dat sense Miss Celia's def, an' de idjot Marcelline's, he opens dat gate ob nights hissef, and dey all walks troo, like Christians!"

"Clean your andirons, Sylphy, and don't give faith to such folly. Above all, do not let a word of this reach your Miss Bertie, if you love her. You know how nervous she is, and you see how hard she takes her cousin's death. Be as mute as a mouse."

"I only speaks from what de wise ones tells me," she muttered, rubbing away, a little sullenly. "I'se 'termined if de Lord spars me do', to see anoder Sunday, to walk down dat way an' try dat gate mysef. I has a notion dat some libbin' person, dun foun' dat key, for Aunt Sabra

'members in her 'fusion like, wen she had dat fit, on de bery day ob de poor idjot's retack, dat a man an' woman bof 'peared to her in a vision, wen she was layin' in de grass onsensible, wid wings, and dat dey walked straight troo dat gate. But she nebber tought ob tryin' ob de lock sense, on 'casion ob her grief, and her notion dat dis was a 'vine warnin' sent by de Lord hissef to prepare de mines ob de survivors for de resurrection day, an' de destruction ob de mudder an' chile. Now Major Favrand, he's a onbeliever, anyway, we all knows, and he 'fuses to look at Sabra, an' cuses her ob bein' de cause of Miss Celia's def, by neglectin' ob de idjot Marcelline. But I'se retermined to try dat lock, kase I has my own 'spicions 'bout dat app'rition. I has tought for some time dat de Widow Weaver had 'session ob dat key; eber sense Miss Bertie saw de bear driv troo into de pleasure grounds. I don't see nuther why dat poor white 'oman should want to 'stroy de idjot Marcelline," (always adding this characteristic appellation to the proper name of the monster, as one would say princess, or countess, and wholly ignorant of its real meaning I am convinced) kase her her whole 'spectations of fortune dun swep' away now, wid dat poor helpless one, an' her chilluns no more dan black folks agin, stuck up wite trash dat dey wus onct."

And Sylphy gathered up her buckskins and brickdust and hied away to polish other brasses and meditate new problems.

The importance of locking the gate seemed to increase with every word Sylphy had spoken; but how was I to achieve this unobserved? Major Favrand roved all day, it was said, about the grounds, disconsolate, entering the house only to sleep and eat, and it was not for me to approach his premises under such well understood circumstances.

Yet if he should get a clue to the story of the unlocked gate (and it was evident Sabra had some dim remembrance of the successive entrance of Colonel Lavigne and myself through its rusty portals), or if the Widow Weaver, already embittered by her disappointment, and a sagacious and vigilant person as it appeared besides, from the selection of Armand Lavigne, should arrive at some shrewd conclusions by means of her own examinations of the long-fastened door of communication between Bellevue and Beau-

seincourt, strange disclosures might follow, that might in turn give rise to stringent conjectures and conclusions.

Circumstantial evidence is a mighty lever of Justice, if an uncertain one, and in Colonel Lavigne's present unhinged condition it would not be difficult to trace to him a clue thus carelessly thrown down. On the other hand, it would never do to trust such a man with my knowledge of his turpitude. My life would not be safe, beneath his roof after such a revelation (of this I was convinced), nor could I bear to acknowledge myself his confederate in concealment. Nay, more, it was barely possible, that if ever arraigned himself, he might by means of the gate-key, should I hand it to him personally, manage to shift suspicion upon my shoulders. Of this I deemed him capable.

I sought, however, for the sake of others, to interpose whatever shield I could between his danger and safety, then and evermore, and revolved for hours the means of securing the gate and getting forever rid of the key unobserved.

To confide in Captain Wentworth, would be to cast a bitter burden on his conscience, such as did not exist in my own case, for my duty to those I loved, exceeded, I felt, any obligation to aid public Justice in her work; and though I could never for one instant extenuate Colonel Lavigne's crime, I did not feel called on to arraign him as a criminal, or put myself forward as his accuser, as a just man might have done, under the peculiar circumstances, involving, as they did, the honor and welfare of a household.

The struggle of feeling was, however, very strong, before I could determine to run the least personal risk, to set at nought the report about the open gate, by locking it myself (no proxy was possible in this case), and casting the key into a bayou, dark and deep, and partly filled with brackish water and noisome weeds bordering the plantation. It was for Bertie's sake, after all, more than her father's safety even, that I so resolved. For I knew with the convictions she entertained about the first unclosing of the gate, how the idea that it had been opened again, would inevitably mix itself with the death of Marcelline.

Already her suspicions were at work, I saw plainly, and to allay these was as essential to her happiness, nay her very life itself, as for her lips to breathe the air of heaven. My first idea was to venture forth at night and do this deed of light in darkness, at any risk; but a very simple and Provi-

dential means of achieving my end presented itself before long. There was occasion for a bottle of leeches, and Doctor Durand remembered to have seen some in a lively condition, on a certain shelf at Bellevue. They were needed promptly now, for the use of Madame Lavigne, and in order to procure them quickly and safely I volunteered to go after them myself, accompanied by Laura, and Louey, and Ossian.

The idea was, that in case of Major Favrand's absence we should know where to seek them, as a less intelligent messenger might not do, for the cupboard described was an obscure one, unknown perhaps to servants as a depository of this sort; besides it was essential for the success of the remedy not to break the vial on the way. I stopped at the gate of Bellevue to wait the return of the little girls, sending them forward to find Major Favrand, (who was somewhere in the grounds, we learned from a boy, who conducted them in search of him), and when perfectly secure from observation, I took the opportunity presented, of locking the soon to be investigated portal. It was unclosed no more, let us trust, by such means, for, as we crossed the narrow bridge that led across the bayou, I dropped the key into its darksome depths, there to repose, as I hoped and believed, securely forever, a mystery until the day of final revelation.

The very touch of that guilty instrument seemed to have soiled my hand, and it was with a feeling of strange reaction that I found myself relieved of its loathed possession. The children with their small basket containing our medical treasures, had bounded on before, and the dog, who had accompanied us, leaped the bayou lower down, so that I was secure from all earthly observation in casting away the key, and felt that the all-beholding eye of Heaven approved my act or its motives.

The walk altogether was a profitable one. The leeches her little girls brought for her relieved the pressure on Madame Lavigne's brain; and the relocking the gate and hurling away the key, saved Bertie's, no doubt, from a burden even more continuous and fatal. I felt like a new creature, I confess, when I rëentered the house of Beauseincourt minus the guilty key.

Yet I will not conceal the fact that my stay under the crime-stained roof was in itself, from that time forth, a source of discontent and bitter self-reproach to me. Had I known where to turn, or how to explain my motives truth-

fully to Captain Wentworth without committing others, by a change of plans, I should have gone forth at once to seek some other seclusion, until the time set for my nuptials should arrive; a time which I desired to make coincident with that of my majority, as nearly as possible.

I had ascertained that it would only have been through courtesy, that Bainrothe could have been expected to give up his rights as guardian in favor of my husband, were my marriage contracted during my minority; and to involve him in unequal conflict with that wily Jesuit, was not what I desired or felt it right to do.

When the hour arrived, when my years were full and my power perfect, I would go, leaning on my husband's arm of strength, into his craven presence and exact an account of his stewardship that he might find it difficult to render. But now, the voice of self-preservation spoke loudly in my breast and called on me imperatively to forbear, to "watch" the ripeness of events for further action, and as patiently as I might, to bide my time.

My engagement at Beauseincourt had been made to suit this emergency. It was to expire about the middle of August and to keep my contract was due to appearances at least, as well as a measure of expediency, that I could not disregard, without as I have said, making revelations to him I loved, grievous and even unjust to others. So I saw no other resource than to "stand and wait," and breathe the poisonous air contaminated by the breath of an assassin, until circumstances, only another name for destiny, should grant me release from their thrall and restore me to my rightful position. Yet I felt many misgivings.

When Madame Lavigne was better, she sent Felicité to invite me to her presence. I followed the ancient servant through gallery and corridor, and up the winding staircase, and across the now thickly carpeted hall, to the darkened chamber, so far guarded with such care and mystery.

So much had transpired since we last met that I stood, much affected, by the bed, from which a wan, transparent hand was stretched to greet me, and from between the white parted curtains of which, a pale, sweet face looked forth, smiling sadly up in mine.

"Sit down, Miriam; I am relieved now of pain and fever, all but debility and disappointment; but it will not add to these to talk to you, though they try to persuade me never

to open my lips; as if the fighting thoughts within could be relieved in any other way. See there! I would not bury my poor babe without showing him to you. My second son, Miriam, out of all my large and fated family, and so lovely! only born to die. The birth was premature, you know."

"Yes, Felicité told me. I was very sorry."

"Draw back the veil, Felicité, and show my boy to Miss Miriam. In an hour more he will be in the grave! But I must be resigned." And still she wept piteously.

I looked upon the beautiful, wax-like creature, slain by the father's hand! the third of his victims in the last five days, with a sad philosophy. Surely it was better no more of his race should cumber the earth, lest in one of them, at last, should lurk his own warped nature, and I thought of the "child angel," of Elia, and the strange idea figured there, that an embryo spirit might be reared to perfection in the land of Paradise, took possession of me, and became a belief from that moment — a spiritual photograph.

I lingered long observing the cherub head already covered with shining rings of hair, the perfect hands and feet white as alabaster, the infant smile arrested on the lips ere life began, then stooping down, kissed the face of the little Prosper and dropped the veil above him.

"It is better thus, perhaps," I said aloud, "great as the grief of such a loss is, such deprivation! Life is bitter at best, and hard to bear, and he will know the joys of eternal life without having proved the sufferings of mortality. He will be there to meet you when the end comes, Madame Lavigne, grown and strengthened on the bread of heaven, standing it may be at the right hand of Christ himself, the perfected pupil of angels."

I spoke earnestly and not without emotion. Her tears flowed fast.

"I thank you for your consolation, dear Miriam," she said at last. "It is only mothers usually who regard a loss like this as worthy of sympathy or even attention; where did you learn to love babies?"

"Infant love has always been a passion with me," I answered, "besides I had a little sister of my own once to whom I was singularly devoted; a baby left motherless when less than a month old. But you shall hear all this at another time; that is if you care to do so."

"Oh, you know I shall care, whenever I am strong enough to be myself again. But I am wholly selfish and egotistical now, I fear, through my strange troubles lately. It was the exertion and the sorrow, and more than all perhaps, the horror that I have experienced, that lost me my poor boy. Words cannot describe the loathsomeness of that deathbed!" and she covered her face with her hands.

"Don't ever allude to it," I whispered, hoarsely, "you must not! Forget it, if you can."

"As to poor Celia," she said, "looking up suddenly and laying her hand on mine, "her life went out like a candle, extinguished by one rude blast. She was not equal to the shock. But she suffered very little and died calmly, conscious to the last. She sent her love individually to all of my children, more especially to Walter. Of you she spoke, Miss Harz, as the only woman she had ever seen, she would be willing to have Major Favrand marry, should he seek another wife. But she knew already of your engagement. She desired me to select from her jewelry a suitable marriage present for you and give the rest to my daughters. Her marriage veil she left to Walter's wife. All this she thought of, though her time was short. Her ordinary clothes are to be divided among her house-servants, her attendant women at least, for whom she felt an unusual attachment.

"'No harsh word to any living creature ever passed her lips,' was her husband's declaration as he kissed her for the last time. He finds on inspection, that her savings have made him passably rich. He had accused her of closeness in her expenditures, wealthy as she was, and profuse as he was himself disposed to be; but he finds his advantage now, in her rare self-denial. It helps to overwhelm him.

"One thing alone she requested Walter, her heir, to do. To build a small chapel, sacred to her memory, on the land of Bellevue. The site she had already selected for such purpose, which she begs him sacredly to carry out, and to endow a minister for the benefit of this neighborhood, so long without one and left to its own devices, often very evil ones. He will do this I know, my own, kind boy!

"And now let me beg you, Miss Harz, to take my place in the household, as far as you are able, until I can appear again. Make every one comfortable, yourself, first of all. Let the school languish awhile, if necessary, and have a

general eye, I entreat you, over my household. My servants are well-trained and will give you little trouble. Still, speak and command, I beg, wherever a change is essential. To know that matters are going on to the satisfaction of all, will conduce much to my recovery. I ask you to do this as I would my eldest daughter. Alas! Marion has not your forethought!"

Assuring her of my zeal and willingness to serve her, I left her somewhat abruptly (though with a heartfelt kiss which she affetionately returned), as I heard the peculiar, spectral step of Colonel Lavigne on the stair. I did not care to meet him just now if I could avoid him, so opening the door of the nursery, I passed out of the chamber of his wife, just as he entered by another opening.

That evening the last spring flower of Beauseincourt, was laid at rest in the same quiet enclosure in which slumbered Celia Favrand and her human horror. The man who read the service so solemnly was he who had added three inmates to that garden of mortality within the last week. Surely "*Williams,*" himself, was never more industrious, nor yet more mysterious, in his peculiar province; for those who have read De Quincy's thrilling sketch of this murderer and been impressed with it as I have been, alone can know how I felt in the presence of Colonel Lavigne.

And now the thought came to me, sternly, how should I conceal from Bertie's discerning eyes, nay, from his own, (which to attract in suspicion, were, perhaps, equal to a death-warrant to me,) my consciousness of his guilt, my aversion to his presence?

Three months of such hypocrisy as would be necessary to screen me from observation, would suffice to destroy me. Yet how should I avoid such necessity, and whither could I fly from Beauseincourt? What refuge had I? What resource remained? The result was plain.

I must bear and struggle, denied even the rich consolation of Captain Wentworth's sympathy; for his was a nature too fine and fastidious for such a compromise or even such concealment, perhaps, as circumstances made essential to preserve the happiness and honor of the family in which I abode, the prosperity of Beauseincourt.

What mockery in this summary of advantages! Prosperity purchased with the price of blood and honor, empty as the bubble blown by a child from its lather of soap and

water! What could it avail? As to happiness it might well be questioned how such a plant could flourish on such a soil, moistened as it was with guilty tears and enriched by human sacrifice.

This theme has possession of me. A mere episode in my own life and distinct from every impulse or inclination of my being, I still find myself pursuing its labyrinthine path. as if fate itself, impelled me to the presence of the Minotaur.

Were I to snap the thread here, however, and leave the tragedy undeveloped, I should ill serve the cause of morals and truth, even if I gratified thereby, the weary and impatient reader. A little while longer he must consent to tarry with me in the shades of Beauseincourt, before I take up again the clue of my story and pursue it to the end, not of life, but of tribulation; not of enjoyment, but of eventfulness. For peace, like oil poured on water, has laid low the billows of my being at last, and left it calm as the mighty ocean, on the shores of which I have made my home, — the boundless Pacific.

From this new land of progress and expectancy I look back on all that I have seen and suffered, as we may revert in some future state of being, perhaps in some far planet, to this existence of ours, distinct and clear to the eyes of memory and sympathy, but no longer a reality or integral part of life.

From the time of the deed which brought such golden consequences to gild the prospects of Walter Lavigne and all that loved him, my own life at Beauseincourt was like the moon, half light and beauty, half shadow and intensest mystery. In the presence of Captain Wentworth all was gladness and glory. In his absence I groped in darkness, for I could not without positive self-condemnation, echo back the gratulation that naturally prevailed in the family. One instance here.

We have seen that Colonel Lavigne was given to toast-drinking, one of his ancient and time-honored fashions. A day or two after Doctor Durand had pronounced Madame Lavigne "on the mend," in his terse, medical way, the master of Beauseincourt ordered up a variety of wines from the cellar, so that every palate might be suited, and prepared with his usual old-school ceremony to offer "a sentiment." Rising for this purpose and looking around complacently on the assembled company, as he had once before done, among

whom again were Captain Wentworth and his aides, he said urbanely, —

"We will now proceed to pledge, with your gracious permission," glancing at his son benignly, "Walter Lavigne and his heritage," and here he bowed profoundly.

The audacity of this proceeding agitated me visibly; I had forgotten for the moment that this sublime actor could not possibly suspect the presence of any one behind the scenes, but felt myself actually injured and outraged, by such premeditated hypocrisy, and ready for the spring.

The toast was received with enthusiasm and drank with hearty good-will (for Walter was a hero now as well as a favorite) by all but one person present. I alone set my glass down untasted with a sick impatience I could not overcome, having raised it to my lips, however, to avoid observation, and repeating only the words "Walter Lavigne," ignored the remainder of the pledge determinedly.

I could not do such violence to my humanity as to say "Amen," to such a pledge of blood! That heritage! how had it been obtained? Three graves might answer! I was no witch of the heath with the knowledge I possessed to repeat the gory countersign, "All hail Macbeth!"

Yet I trembled lest the warped and lurid eyes of the tiger on the scent of blood, might have embraced my proceeding. I was wonderfully relieved when I looked towards him again to find him engaged in a passage of arms with Gregory, and apparently unconscious of my presence.

Indeed with the exception of the few rare occasions on which it had suited him to make me a depository of feeling, rather than confidence, Colonel Lavigne had, during my residence under his roof, religiously observed the promise he had made on the occasion of our first interview, "to have very little indeed to do with me." And that little I now earnestly hoped would become finer "by degrees and beautifully less." Indeed absorbed as he was just now with his anxieties and prospects, I was relieved to find that he overlooked me altogether, as it was natural he should have done, at such a time, even with the best feelings and intentions towards me, and had his motives been pure as crystal.

I was therefore a little surprised when I saw him approaching me, with his grave and spectral stalk immediately after dinner. Unfortunately I sat near one of the drawing-

room windows, for the moment alone, and he stood with his hands clasped behind him silently for a short time before me, opening and shutting his mouth, in a solemn, suggestive way he had before speaking, when there was anything unusual to communicate. He began at last and my heart died within me.

"This is the second time, Miss Harz, that you have refused a pledge at my table. Can you offer any explanation of your singular conduct to-day?"

"None; I have none to offer," I replied, frozen with dread and indignation both, and gasping in spite of my best efforts at composure with my hand upon my heart.

"Was it from accident or design that"—

He was interrupted here, and I was saved the pain and trouble of replying, by the unexpected advent of Ossian through the window by which I was sitting, covered with mud and dirt, and bearing in his mouth a leather string from which dangled an instantly recognized, peculiar key, which he laid, with wagging tail and an expression of affectionate gratulation beaming from his large dark eyes, upon my knee, begriming my white dress considerably, as he brushed against me.

Colonel Lavigne's face was a study then! The blood retreated from his sallow cheek until it looked like pale yellow wax, and his features seemed to shrink as if compressed together by an unseen hand; his very lips were livid and contracted and his frame shook as if stirred by an ague spasm. He had gained a clue evidently.

I was nerved by the emergency to sudden firmness, as by an impulse of intuition, such as a trying situation sometimes develops, even in cowardly organizations, the presence of a wild beast, for instance, or inevitable danger of any kind.

"Down, Ossian!" I cried, as if in anger, "see how you have soiled my dress with your treasure-trove, and torn away the jessamine vine too, with your plunge. What can this key belong to, Colonel Lavigne?" and I handed it to him carelessly.

In that brief interval he had regained his self-command, and I, too, had found time to collect my faculties.

"Let me look at it," he said, extending his hand for it, "it is truly an odd concern," speaking very deliberately, after a pause, "a double-footed key, like a boy taking the first position in dancing." And he laughed grimly.

"Or a Janus-faced key," I said, examining it in turn, "if we imagine this the head instead of the foot."

"What an unearthly looking instrument it is, to be sure!" he exclaimed.

"St. Peter may have dropped it from his bunch for aught we know," I rejoined, desperately.

"One of the keys of heaven, eh?" he said, laughing, completely reassured now, I perceived, by my manner, and somewhat amused by the suggestion doubtless. Then murmuring, "well, perhaps you are half right," he dropped the key in his pocket and turned quietly away, forgetting, as it seemed, to finish his interrupted interrogatory. Nor was the lecture and demanded explanation about my delinquency as to the proffered toast, ever resumed, much to my relief, I acknowledge. It seemed that he must soon have forgotten the whole matter or concluded that it was of no consequence, or was in absolute bad taste, for from that time forth there was nothing in his behavior towards me to mark the slightest misgiving on the subject.

I had occasion a short time after this little occurrence, to send for Doctor Durand, to consult him about a slight indisposition during one of his visitations, rather than visits to Madame Lavigne, who was long an invalid.

Until that time I had not seen the worthy doctor face to face since the dènouement of the Bellevue tragedy. Glimpses of his vanishing coat-skirts I had indeed caught from the corridors or windows, but he had not sought an interview with me, nor had I thrown myself recently in his way, as I sometimes used to do, for a ten minutes' lively chat, and war of wit, if such title our badinage merited.

Truth to tell I had somewhat resolutely shunned him of late, for I dreaded his scrutiny and the detective qualities which I judged to be inherent in his frank, blunt nature, along with his medical acumen. He had the "doctor's eye," unquestionably, that gift without which science and experience are unavailing, and like Doctor Pemberton in that respect, though unlike him in all else, was almost, instinctively quick at diagnosis. Yet on the whole he was a blunt man, and somewhat obtuse in common matters.

"Well, what is it to-day?" he asked as he entered my room and closed the door softly after him, "a chill, eh? Oh, a mere nervous rigor, no sign of recurrent fever, I think. Let me see your tongue. Clean, but too red; eyes lively

though, pulse fast, but not feverish. Have you well in a day or two. Where are my saddle-bags? Oh, I remember now, I left them down stairs; but never mind yet, I want a little talk anyhow, and I have still a half hour to spare," looking at his watch. "Sit still, I will send up the remedies and directions, as I pass on my way to my horse. You mustn't go up and down stairs for a day or two if you can help it. Avoid draughts, excitement, and undue exercise."

Much relieved by his assurances and directions, as I dreaded chills in a climate where congestion is so sudden, obstinate, and fatal, I promised obedience to his commands, and brightened up at once for the proposed talk, usually commenced in badinage, between us.

"Now, doctor, do your best, I have not seen an agreeable man since you were last here, and am rusting in my sheath."

"Why, what has become of Wentworth?"

"Oh, he is out of the question now, you know, beyond comparison, rather."

"Not a man, but a seraph, I suppose, in your estimation."

"How sagacious you are! But I confess I have seen no evidence of wings yet about him."

"Constant, is he? Well, time will show. Engaged men are proverbially dull, however, I remember, so I accept the compliment as it first stood, without exceptions."

"One would think it was your first, from the work you make over it. Yet I suppose no man is ever more flattered by ladies, than a popular physician. "*Ecce signum,*" Madame Lavigne and her daughters. Esculapius himself, would have found his head turned in time by such attentions, such appreciation!"

His countenance fell, strangely I thought, in such association, and a tear stood in his honest gray eye, perfectly bewildering to my comprehension for a moment.

"But the friend I loved best among them all is gone!" he said, mournfully; "sweet Celia Favrand, she who never flattered. Ah! Miss Harz, I have lived long in this world of trouble, but beheld no angel like to that one even in a region where there are many dutiful and admirable women. She excelled them all!"

"Her cross was heavy," I answered, "but Christ aided her to bear it nobly."

"Yes, her love for her Saviour was a realization that I have seen in no other instance. It was transubstantiation, spiritual, if not material. He was ever with and about her; she never forgot his presence, nor acted otherwise than as he might have approved. Sometimes, when called to see her, I have felt thrilled and awe-stricken, by her strange, shadowy beauty. In her white garments and with her large, clear eyes, she looked and moved like an ethereal spirit. Poor Favrand! how he idolized his wife, God alone knew; he never knew himself. For he has no more idea of self-analysis, than the merest child." And he shook his honest head.

"The world will be changed to him now," I said. "He will see men as they are henceforth. He is no longer a millionaire and dispenser of favors; not a prince, but a simple gentleman like the rest, and the change will embitter him, I fear."

"He has been very improvident, certainly; but for his wife's forethought he must have been dependent. This has made him what you or I would call rich, Miss Harz. But what are a hundred thousand dollars to Major Favrand? He squandered half as much yearly, and more in three months, about five years ago, on one trip to Europe which he accomplished alone. He was a sad spendthrift; as generous as the day, though, and a man of high honor, as we have all seen manifested.

"Walter Lavigne will dispense the property," I replied, "better, perhaps, than he would have done. Besides, he has a design of giving part of it back to him in fee simple, I believe."

"Indeed! I had not heard that before. It is certainly very nobly intended. But Favrand would never accept it; never, in the world! You don't know the man if you think so. But it is strange to me Lavigne does not understand him better. Favrand is the last person to come under a pecuniary obligation to any one, the very last! But it does seem great injustice that he should have nothing at all, from her who loved him better than the whole world beside!"

Then ensued a pause, during which he again consulted my pulse.

"Miss Harz!" suddenly rousing himself, as he dropped my wrist from his fingers, "were you at Bellevue during the illness of that poor, wretched being?" and he fixed his eyes earnestly on my face, "Marcelline I mean?"

"No, I was not called on, and was thankful, I confess, to be exempted from such an office. I was dreading that my turn might come. It was a great relief to me that they did not see fit to send for me. I should certainly have obeyed the summons, though the task would have been so onerous and repulsive. Madame Lavigne herself was wholly unnerved by the spectacle."

"Yes, it was a grievous one, no doubt, but I wish you had been there," he mused, shaking his head, slowly, and eyeing the floor.

"I could have done no good, Doctor Durand."

"But you might have formed a dispassionate opinion, which none of the rest could have been expected to do, under the circumstances, as to the malady in question. You are clairvoyante, you know, about disease," trying to smile, but failing in the effort.

"Doctor Lucas decided that, in the beginning, by pronouncing it Asiatic cholera. Major Favrand had considered it cholera morbus before. As it was fatal however"— I hesitated, "I suppose the doctor was right."

"It was neither!" he said, looking up suddenly and sternly, "neither one nor the other. I have never said this before, nor must you repeat it. It would do no good; but one must speak or die, sometimes. I very much fear that the wretched old negro, tired of her charge, poisoned the poor idiot. I have had my conscience singularly disturbed on this subject and thought once or twice of naming it to Favrand. But it could effect no other result than to torture him. The poor devil is drinking herself to death as fast as possible, I hear, and the law needs no better auxiliary than such remorseful debauchery. Besides to exhume that repulsive corse would involve more than ordinary pain, require more than usual nerve!"

I remained stricken and silent. Continuing after a pause, he said, —

"And yet I have my doubts as to the true course to be pursued. The property is gone under any circumstances, to be sure, and that is, after all, the principal consideration. Really, Lavigne should pension off old Sabra," rousing from soliloquy and smiling bitterly. "Her act came in the very nick of time to save him from ruin. This he confesses himself, for what is Walter Lavigne's is his father's, and there is enough to pay every debt and enrich every child

besides; So Marion can afford to marry her Vernon now, and Madge her Gregory, you see! How the wheel turns, to be sure!"

"Doctor, you know everything! You are as great a gossip as Doctor Franklin, Voltaire, or Doctor Samuel Johnson himself!" I roused myself to say.

"I am father confessor, you know, in this family, besides medical adviser. The place is no sinecure, I assure you. The sins of these amiable women are manifold, between ourselves, and they won't submit to penance." And here he laughed merrily for the first time, but I was now too sad for any sympathy with the vein of *persiflage* I had commenced.

"To revert to that dreadful suspicion," I said, after a pause, "you don't intend to speak of it at all, I understand, doctor? It is to remain buried in your own breast, as in mine, is it not? Am I correct?" I asked, with suppressed eagerness, which fortunately escaped his notice.

"I don't know what to do; I fancy, however, I *shall* let it drop. It could do no good; it could not recall the dead, or give Favrand back his fortune, you know."

"And it might be the means of setting the Widow Weaver at a lawsuit," I interrupted. "She is half crazed with disappointment, they say, as it is, and would catch at a straw of suspicion in her desperate and drowning condition. Then it would agitate Bertie so dreadfully! She has almost a mania on such subjects, and has been greatly depressed ever since Madame Favrand's death."

"Ay, there was the crying offence after all! Not but what I regard human life, as God's property alone, with which no man can meddle without blood-guiltiness, unless by the laws of war or honor. But still we know what a miserable mockery of existence that was, at best, and how well it might have been spared from this earth of ours, could suffering have terminated there. But it did not, it could not! The feeble thread of Celia Favrand's existence was snapped by the ordeal to which this miserable old poisoner subjected her. For the symptoms, as described to me, were those produced by arsenic, nothing else; and Doctor Lucas ought to have his ears shortened, or be permitted to bray medically no more, for delivering such an absurd opinion. Asiatic cholera, indeed, when there is none nearer than the East Indies that we know of! Only slight evidence of a general epidemic on the eve of setting

out on its travels a second time, ready packed for a journey.* Sporadic cases do not occur under such circumstances. And Lucas and Jones are a pair of quacks and donkeys! But it is as well to humor the idea, as we don't mean to expose the truth or pluck the heart from the mystery. If it were anybody but that poor old drunken negro, though, who has had enough to craze her, no doubt, in attending for three and twenty years to that wretched incubus, shut up eternally and by the necessity of her position like an imprisoned owl, or a toad in a stone, I would lend a hand to build a gallows for the offender as high as that got ready by Mordecai for Haman and help to hang him or her thereon, if necessary to carry out retributive justice, with my own Esculapian hands!"

"You called me bloodthirsty once, Doctor, what are you now?"

I asked this question like one in a blinding dream.

"*Just*, my dear, which is very different. Providence orders matters strangely. Here is a whole family crushed by the act of a malignant or insane darkey. A lovely woman laid in her grave, when by unusual care, her "taper," of life might have been "cherished," as the old song goes, some years longer; her husband's happiness thus far prolonged if not insured, and his prosperity lengthened into extreme old age probably. That is, had nature been allowed to carry out her scheme of life with regard to that poor Marcelline! You know, I suppose, that her father's income was made coincident with her existence, so as to secure his oversight of her condition. The most thoroughly successful strategem as it would have proved, but for this contretemps, that mistaken humanity ever adopted to benefit its object."

"Yes. It was a strange device, certainly. But what an injustice and tyranny the whole will was, to be sure. Marcelline ought to have been provided for against want, of course, but an asylum would have been the best place for her in case of her mother's death, and even during her lifetime, I think."

"I agree with you there. But Colonel Lavigne seriously offended his uncle in early life, by making this very remark, they say. Major Favrand, he from his very organization

* The milestones between cholera epidemics had not been set up by experience at that period, or Doctor Durant would scarcely have hazarded this prediction.

despised, and considered a mere fortune-hunter, which he never was, never! I have known him intimately for a lifetime. I can vouch for his honor as my own. Yet I think it was to cut these two men out of the enjoyment of his estate, that Armand Lavigne framed his will as he did."

"But what did Colonel Lavigne do, besides make the remark you cited, to cause such animosity?" I questioned, not without an eager curiosity.

"Ah, none can know. Armand Lavigne was a proud, peculiar man, devoted to his own family, however, even if not easy to get along with. Lavigne is an oddity, also, as you see, without tact and remarkably plain-spoken. No man living regards less the peculiarities of others, and he hasn't a concealment on earth!"

"Ah, doctor, one may be very good at physical diagnosis, I perceive, and poor at mental analysis," I replied, gravely. "I think differently. On near acquaintance, I believe Colonel Lavigne to be a man of reserves, of many concealments even."

"You are mistaken, child; mistaken if you *are* medically clairvoyante. I have often been astonished to hear him discuss his private affairs in the presence of mere strangers with perfect openness. His debts, his difficulties, any one was welcome to know of; matters men usually keep to themselves and ought to. And he has no more tact, as I said before, than a rhinoceros! If a man's uncle had been recently hanged, he meeting him, for instance, from mere association of ideas, would be sure to ask especially after the health of this disgraced and forever-to-be-ignored relative; not intending the slightest offence in the world, nor understanding later, how any could have been taken. Then he is too absent-minded to be mysterious. It would be in vain for him to try and be profound; everything would come out sooner or later.

"'What a fool Favrand is!' he said one day in his hearing, quite unconscious of his presence. Another time, he remarked, 'She thinks no one knows it is a wig,' with his eyes fixed on the Widow Boardman's artificial hair. Nor could he be persuaded that he had uttered himself aloud. These are only specimens of his want of reticence. But his whole family are aware of this weakness. Madame Lavigne trembles for him and others whenever any subject is specially tabooed. It is sure to attract him specially."

Then suddenly rising, he said. "Now, I must go. I have still a dozen calls to make to-day, and twenty miles to ride,?' again referring to the flattened orange in his pocket, the watch by which the health of "Lesdernier," was regulated.

"You lead a hard life, doctor," I said, vaguely.

"Yes, a dog's life, as poor Rip Van Winkle said of his favorite Wolf, you remember. My mistress is necessity, though, instead of Mrs. Winkle; that is the only difference. My wife is indulgence personified."

"Don't breathe a syllable as to that suspicion of yours about the poison just now," I gasped, as he went out laying my hand lightly on his arm. "Bertie is so eccentric; and between ourselves, I fear Colonel Lavigne himself, is slightly shaken by this sudden prosperity."

"I think I *shall* let it drop," he said, slowly, "but I cannot tell yet, I can't decide. I have to reflect a little more on the subject. One has time for meditation, I assure you, in these long, lonely rides over hill and dale, and conscience will assert itself in solitude. But take care of yourself and be a good girl until I see you again. Farewell!"

And he went off in his usual hurry, leaving me far more oppressed and mentally ill at ease than he found me.

I sat all that day, I remember, bound in a sort of gloomy dream, not unlike the effect that succeeds the exhilaration and composing effect of opium. My indisposition formed a sufficient excuse for entire seclusion; even Bertie was denied admission to my darkened chamber, and my mind wrestled with circumstances, until, weary and overtaxed, it was fain to rest, vanquished by the burden thrown upon it.

But reaction, my second nature, on the very next day asserted herself vigorously, and I enjoyed the sunshine and the shadow, and the faces and voices of those dear to me, with a new delight, born of recent sufferings. Above all did I cling to Captain Wentworth's presence now, which gave such glory to my being that it was like the withdrawal of sunshine to feel it pass away. And yet with a wild and wistful yearning, I questioned sometimes of the endurance of this exceeding happiness — questioned vainly, as do all who ask of fate.

CHAPTER XXI.

AS Sylphy combed my hair on Sunday night, preparatory to other arrangements for sleeping (Bertie being with her mother on that occasion, over whom some one of her daughters still held nightly supervision, feeble and nervous as she still continued to be), the subject of the closed gate was resumed by that voluble person.

She had been there that very afternoon, she declared, and found it locked, and she did not know what to think or whom to "suspicion;" but she was compelled to drop all further investigations or discussions of the subject for fear of her master's wrath, with which, she said, he had sorely threatened her, in case she meddled any more with such affairs.

"How did your master know of your walk or its object, Sylphy?" I asked, indulging in a not unnatural curiosity.

"Dunno, Miss Mirime. All dat I does know is dis. Jes' as I was shakin' de gate like, to see ef it would come unfastened all alone, ob its own sef, I felt dem long fingers grip hold ob my neck behin', and de nex' ting I knowed, I was lyin' out in de palmetto patch, onsensible, an' masta hissef standin' ober me.

"'Gal! you is too meddlesome!' he disclaimed, 'mine your own business, an' keep away from dis Bellevue gate, or mayhap I may sen' you to Mr. Cartarel or your Uncle Quimbo for correction. What brought you ober dis way, Madam Sylphy?'" grinnin' like, "(I mos' hates masta wen he looks at me dat way, Miss Mirime)," bending low to whisper this piece of information, "he 'minds me ob dat ole gray Poll parrot ob Madame Grambo's, down at Le Noir's landin'; and do' he nebber laid han' on me before, in his lifetime, I was afeerd now! Den I sez, still settin down in de palmetto patch, like a sparrow hen, wen de hounds is in chase, skeered to def, I tells you wat, Miss Mirime, an' raisin' up my two jined han's jes' so, I sez, 'Masta, it's de

sperits I'se come to see about, wat walks troo dis here gate mos' ebry night, de wise ones tells me. Miss Celia an' de idjot Marcelline, an' de ole masta, Armand Lavigne, all wid white wings an' as tall as a poplar tree.'

"Den he turned mighty pale an' cotched at de fence spike wid one han', leanin' hard on his cane wid de odder, 'Who locked dis gate, gal?' he 'terrogated. 'Had you any han' in dis mystery?' dat's what he called it, I 'stinctly 'members, 'Speak! or I will make you,' an' he shuck his stick at me an' quibered de balls ob his eyes, till he looked like de evil one bewitched, or ole Jake (dat's little Cora's grand-dad), hissef, wen de fits is on him.

"'Masta,' I said, 'ef I knowed who locked dat gate, I'd not be here 'speremententin,' (dat stans to reason now, don't it, Miss Mirime?) 'I has my 'spicions, but I doesn't know nuffin' ob de matter, I 'sures you ob dat, masta, I does indeed. An' now please let me get up, sah, an' creep home; an' I 'clars 'fore de gracious Lord, I nebber will set my two precious feet in dis part ob de plantation groun' no more. I'se bruised already, till I feel like a jelly-bag, masta, an' I can hear my bones rattlin' like dey was all smashed up. I isn't no 'possom to drap about widout hurt or hindrance, and mistis nebber in all her born days'— But he cut me off mighty sharp like, I tells you, Miss Mirime, sayin,—

"'Gather yoursef up den, an' clear out! an' hold your tongue about this matter, or I'll rip it from your mouth and grind you to powder next time.' An' he wabed his cane rite ober my white silk bonnet wat you gib me. I 'spected ebry minute to hear de crown smashed in, an' you better blebe I made 'double quick,' as Masta Walter calls it, an' running home like a partridge wid one wing broke, nebber stopped till I reached my mistis' room. I was safe dar, I know; safe as King is wen he gets near masta's cheer, for we was raised for pets and has 'ticlar purtection."

"And that is the reason you are going to unite your fortunes," I observed, smiling as I thought of the marriage of Abou Hassan, the favorite in the Arabian story of the 'Sleeper Awakened,' and its golden results, and profitable stratagems.

"I don't know how dat will be, Miss Mirime," she said, suddenly suspending her operations with the comb and clinging to the back of my chair, almost convulsively, while she heaved a heartfelt sigh. "Sens Masta Walter dun

come to his own, King is mightily stuck up, mightily indeed!" She said this mournfully. "Dey talks ob takin' him to France in Paris an' lebin' me, kase mammy is ole an' has de fallin' sickness, an' mistiss, she don't want to 'stress mammy by takin' me away, an' dat critter King is crazy like, 'bout wat he's gwine to do, an' gwine to see an wear, an' de fine libery Masta Walter's gwine to get for him ober dar, an' gol' watches for him an' Jura, an' bress pins, and seems to me I was happier when we was all poor an' bleeged to stay togeder, equal like at Beauseincourt." And pausing she wiped away a tear, like the soldier in the song. "But 'pears like, Miss Mirime, dat's de natur' ob men, wite and black," shakin' her head dolefully, and with this philosophic remark and finale she meekly resumed her functions.

"What made you so wise, Sylphy, on the subject of the ways of fickle men?" I asked, after a pause.

"Dar was Miss Jones's beau (dat's de doctor's daughter, Miss Mirime), soon as he foun' his gol' mine, he drapped her like a hot yam, an' now he's courtin' ob Miss Durkee; an' sens Masta Walter's got his own, dar's Masta Luke Gregory makin' up to Miss Madge, an' dun turned his back altogedder on you, Miss Mirime, kase you is poor, I spec, wat he was so fond ob in de beginning. But Captain Wentworth! he's a rale gentleman, I blebe, de best ob de bunch ob de Yankee engineers, an' I is glad you is skewered on his refections any way."

"I am not conscious of anything of the kind," I could not help saying, laughingly, as I thought of brains on a "skewer" toasting before a slow fire. But she took me literally and somewhat startlingly.

"Den you is disappointed like all de res', Miss Mirime," she said, sympathetically, adding after awhile as she met my laughing eye in the glass before us, "but you can't fool me when I sees your face! Dat 'trays ebry ting, Miss Mirime. It's as good for de 'flexion as the glass itsef, an' dem eyes of yours can speak as plain as Ossian's."

"Thank you, Sylphy, for the compliment; he has very fine, expressive eyes, I know."

"Den you is gwine to be married, sure enough, Miss Mirime? Your eyes dun tole me ebry ting!"

"Oh, not until I go home, Sylphy."

"You has a home den ob your own?"

"Yes, or will have by that time. My father's house is

mine, when I come of age, Sylphy. And a pleasant place it is."

"I wish mistis would let me stay wid you an' Miss Bertie, wen she goes to de salt water countries! An' mammy too! Maybe dat Norf air might do de ole soul some good! an' I could wait on you bof; but you 'fers de free white gals, I s'pose."

"No, Sylphy, I have never seen a waiting-maid so nice and tidy as yourself. But who said Miss Bertie was going North with me?"

"She dun tole mistiss so hersef. 'Let me go wid Miss Harz,' she says, 'an' I will stay away from Europe forebber!' Dat's jes' de words she 'spatiated, for I heerd her wid my own two blessed ears."

"You have the ears of a mole, Sylphy; you hear everything."

"I hears a heap more dan I knows de meanin' ob, Miss Mirime! Dem book words is mighty puzzlin' to me; 'specially dem French words, like Miss Lurlie's beaux always speak wid. It takes all my retention to understan' dem, eben wen dey makes de dumb signs. Do you tink sich folks hab good hard sense, Miss Mirime, or is dey jes' foolin' like?"

Then I told her of the building of the tower of Babel, and the confusion of tongues consequent on this act of presumption, and the hope we have that in heaven there will be but one universal language spoken, that all will understand, the same that Jesus speaks. And she went away, it is to be hoped, enlightened.

It will be seen that Sylphy's conversation, was a strange mixture of Bertie's words and her own idiom. Altogether a compound worthy of the attention of linguists."

A trial was in store for me that I had not anticipated. Captain Wentworth was summoned to Washington so hastily that he had just time to bid me a hasty farewell, pack a valise and set forth on his journey. He was accompanied to Savannah by Mr. Gregory, who went to take charge of a band of laborers employed to work on the mail route he had lately surveyed. They had been sent round by steamer from New York, raw, sturdy Irishmen, fit food for malaria, but cheaper, for some purposes, than negroes, since they were not a permanent investment.. Self-preservation is synonymous with the protection of property, and within such category comes the slave.

The man whose slave picks out his own value every year in cotton, at late advanced prices of that staple, finds him too valuable to be put to the unwholesome task of clearing, and the sons of the sod are selected for this work, which usually puts them under the very sod at last, they come to lay bare to the rays of the Southern sun.

What matter while there are more where they come from? The Southerner takes the Irishman, with the English estimate attached, a mere tool to be employed and thrown by when broken, unimportant as a citizen, and if not able to labor, a cumberer of the earth, neither to be endured or sympathized with. The negro in his Southern cabin, is a thousand times more comfortable than Paddy at home; and as to Paddy in exile, what negro would be content, even in Africa, to live in his desolate looking shanty?

But this was a government contract, and no individual could, in this instance, be blamed for employing them, if these poor creatures chose to lay their bones in the swamps of Lesdernier for the chance of three months wages!

On the heights above were the chosen summer retreats of those who dwelt in the lowlands and by the river banks, and as the parable tells us Lazarus looked down on Dives, from the secure shelter of Abraham's bosom, these fortunate devotees of the goddess Sanitaria, could survey at their leisure the ghastly and fever-stricken wretches who made their lairs on the edges of the pestilential plain beneath and opened new lands.

Thus, in comparative security, might the colony of engineers survey and conduct work which must prove inevitably fatal to its immediate prosecutors, and yet, to a humane mind, what position could be more replete with painful responsibility? So felt Captain Wentworth, as he looked forward to a summer at the Refuge.

"If I can possibly get off from this work," he said, "by the first of July, I will do so, and we will go North then, instead of later. Let us be married here, at that season, and proceed together."

How my heart leaped at the proposition? I had recently learned, incidentally, through Gregory, who had mentioned it in connection with his own affairs, that Bainrothe would remain abroad until October. Yes, it was just what would relieve me from the shadow of evil fortune to another, in no way connected with me, and from which I sought to emerge,

as eagerly as a bird shut up in a darkened room might have sought sunlight. But everything must rest with him and the judgment he would form, when he knew the web of circumstances by which I was surrounded. It was not until after he left me that with this view, I determined to write him a few explanatory lines by Mr. Gregory, who for purposes of his own lingered some hours longer at Beauseincourt. They were to meet it was agreed at parting, at Le Noir's crossing where Captain Wentworth had business and would wait the arrival of his aide, and where he would receive from his hands the clue to my mystery or a portion of it. He might send me an answer promptly by the same secure means for Mr. Gregory was indisputably cautious and careful, with all his apparent off-handedness, and responsible too, as had been found by one who would brook no trifling of any kind with his affairs.

For reasons that will be more apparent, hereafter I append here the hasty note I dispatched by Mr. Gregory to Captain Wentworth.

"You have known for sometime, my dearest friend, that I was preserving carefully some secrets of my own, with which I have hesitated to burden you and for which I have prayed your forbearance. In your noble confidence, you have never demanded of me to sacrifice these resolutions, based on my own safety alone; and which I deemed it best to preserve until the time for action should arrive.

"You have doubtless thought these reservations of mine more unimportant than they were, in your estimate of my 'over-scrupulousness,' some woman's detail of dead affairs of the heart or hoarded bitterness founded on wounded "*amour propre*," perhaps, which I deferred laying before you until our interests were one. Wentworth! my wrongs were deeper! I have neither time nor inclination to enter into details now, agitated as I still feel, by our recent parting and the proposition this involved of a change of plans in anticipation of our day of union. But I have determined to place in your hand the clue of my mystery to be developed later, before you go to a distance and to the very scene probably, in which this was enacted. For your affairs may lead you to the city of my birth.

Be patient however, and self-contained, for we must bide our time as by the stringency of my father's will, I am

placed, until the time of my majority, singularly in the power of two persons alike evil-minded and designing, from whom you could only physically protect me. One, the executor of that testament, false to every duty and principle of loyal guidance, the other, alas! a woman who is, or who should have been my sister, who is unfortunately only my guardian and my foe. Enough to say, I am that heir of whom Gregory spoke to you, as in the power of Bainrothe. You have hitherto heard only a portion of my name. My father's was Monfort; he was an Englishman, well born and honorable, and my childhood and youth were passed in affluence, all swept away by the failure of the United States Bank and the peculations of Bainrothe. The rest I leave till another day, but when we meet again, I shall put you in unreserved possession of everything connected with my life and history. In the meantime consider whether it be not best I should abide where I am until the last of August, for the beginning of September brings with it my majority and natural emancipation. I have not another moment; Gregory waits impatiently. Pray reply to this by his secure hand. Yours ever,

MIRIAM HARZ MONFORT.

Four or five days elapsed before Mr. Gregory's return. He came to Beauseincourt immediately; for his engagement with Madge was now a settled thing, the consent of her parents and potent brother having been at length sought and formally given, and in the last instance reluctantly. He lost no time in assuring me of the safe delivery of my note, "which struck Wentworth all in a heap, Miss Harz, I declare, and left me amazed with curiosity at such a result. Not grief, however," he added, saucily.

"Well, and the reply, Mr. Gregory?" I asked, with an eagerness I could ill disguise, stretching forth my hand involuntarily to receive the expected missive.

"Is with the catfish, Miss Harz, at Le Noir's landing, I fear. I never was as sorry for anything in my life, but I dropped my pocket-book as I was getting into the skiff to cross the river (the ferry-boat being aground), and it sunk like lead, because of a few pieces of gold among the bank-notes. It was pretty much all I possessed of money, but I would give the rest of its contents cheerfully, to have your note back. It was placed there for very safe-keeping and

of course, is, or at least I fear so, irrevocably lost. But Wentworth will write again from New York, never fear, and as it was a mere billet, very hastily written, I believe in pencil (at least the direction was leaden I am sure), it could have contained nothing very important, I hope. Only the everlasting conjugation I suppose, and he hummed the old couplet,—

"Amo amas,
I love a lass
Like a cedar tall and slender."

in his unapproachably impertinent fashion, cool, sunny and supercilious all at once.

Provoked as I was at this contretemps, I could not do less than receive graciously, Mr. Gregory's whimsical explanation. His loss seemed on the surface to have been incomparably greater than my own, and I should have been selfish to have refused him my sympathy. Besides it was very certain I should soon hear again. It remained for later days to show how inestimable the reception of that note would have been to me, and what a keystone it proved to my arch of life.

Its loss entailed upon me, confusion, anxiety, delay that eventuated in sorrow and misfortune, and came near drawing down on my own head, the failure of my hopes in complete and crushing ruin. Of such importance was it, to repeat my figure, to the completion and strength of the already constructed arch, reared by the hands of honor and affection. But from such knowledge I was shielded then, and the regret I felt was wholly separate from mistrust or apprehensions. I missed the kind and tender words of cheer that I felt convinced the lost note contained, and on which I should have sustained my courage until later communications reached me from across the waves. It was my wish and intention to write at once to Captain Wentworth and acquaint him with the loss I had sustained, but Mr. Gregory had forgotten his address, if he ever knew it. I was fain to wait for the promised letter to be written, as he had assured me, on shipboard, and dispatched as soon as his foot should touch the shore. And I knew full well the sacredness he attached to all promises, however slight.

"You might as well attempt to follow a will of the wisp as Wentworth when he once gets started," said Gregory,

interrupting my reverie and, as it seemed, almost replying to the tissue of my thoughts with his ready penetration.

"But he is a man of his word," he continued, "and will surely write promptly and, no doubt, repeat several times, the contents of that ever-to-be-lamented Beotian pencil sketch of his. Variety is not his specialty you will find, Miss Harz, when you come to be better acquainted; indeed I I fancy the word hum-drum might suit," hesitating between the two syllables and looking at me significantly.

"That is enough, Mr. Gregory! Do not commit yourself again, I beg, or I may be tempted to indiscretion. Such slurs do injustice to my ideas of friendship."

"Oh, but your geese are all swans," he said, laughingly.

"Better thus a thousand times than the reverse. Friendship is worth but little that does not gild and ennoble its possessions."

"I thought you worshipped truth, Miss Harz. Bare, naked, shivering, starving, staring truth, drowned in a well!"

"There is truth in sunshine as well as storm," I made reply, "yet we know how differently they make a landscape look. What so dreary as a rainy sea? What so joyous as ocean glittering in the rays of the sun? Yet both sun and storm are truthful mediums in their turn. I have my preferences."

"You have your own way of putting everything. But I confess I should prefer to owe affection to judgment rather than imagination."

"Imagination is little worth, unless it be based on truth. But what a glorious superstructure it is when reared on such a foundation! I would not give much for any mind without it. It is the leaven that lightens our earthly bread."

"It is a partial sun whose prototype we find not in nature, however, that only gilds a chosen few, Miss Harz!" he replied. "What would I not give to be the object selected for such a flood of radiance! one of the gilded friends, one of the snowy swans, one of the elect, in such a glorious heritage! But you hate me unreasonably; would that I could remove your prejudice!"

"Why descend to personalities?"

"You do not deny it then? You do indeed detest me! I have suspected it for sometime. And do you know I am

fool enough to let this idea make me miserable? What is it you despise?" folding his arms defiantly; "my ugliness, my manners, my name, my ways, my"—

"*Toute ensemble,*" I interrupted, laughing. "There! I verily believe the very air of this place is infectious; and that all who enter Beauseincourt, are like those who stood in the Castle of Truth, celebrated in Madame de Genlis' story, and reveal themselves without intending it."

"You are the Circè then; all fall under your spell without distinction," bowing profoundly. "But to return to a little text you let fall just now," he continued, with a malignant gleam in his eyes, one on which I like very well to descant in my wise, wild way on occasions. "'Why descend to personalities?' Is it in compliment to and in imitation of Wentworth, who asked me all sorts of questions about you while we remained together, personal questions, with a most preternatural eagerness. Just as if I knew," speaking with affected indifference, and glancing off to one side, while he plucked a flower from its stem, that leaned over the portico where we were sitting, "Just as if I knew, or had any means of knowing," he repeated, "why you wear your dresses invariably high in the neck and closed at the wrists, even if transparent, or whether (in truth it is a very disagreeable revelation to make to you, Miss Harz, but I feel for some reasons compelled to do it), whether I had heard that you had some scars from an ancient burn, which you sought in this way to conceal on neck and arm, or had myself observed them? All this he asked and I was obliged to admit very reluctantly that I had observed something of the sort through the medium of a white thule spenser, but that the beauty of the form and skin were only thus enhanced"— He was interrupted here.

"Wretch! I do not believe a word you tell me!" fell from my writhing, quivering, indignant lips, and I rose to leave him with a feeling of exasperation rare in my nature.

"Stay! just for one moment," he implored, frightened, no doubt, at the results of his own transparent malice; "To do Wentworth justice, his motives were above suspicion. For the rest, I humbly beg your pardon Miss Harz, I do indeed."

"My pardon indeed! Circumstances may compel me to bear your odious presence, they can do no more." And I

abruptly left him, to shun him invariably thereafter when ever practicable.

It was in this way that Gregory loved to throw out his poisonous darts and wound to the quick the woman he could not conquer. He never ventured so far again, however, and I found it best to affect entire obtuseness, or at least indifference, to his insinuations in future, for to these he thereafter confined himself; though with my keenly susceptible nature to insult and ridicule, they never failed to sting and rankle. Strange means wherewith to secure the regard he pretended to covet.

One hint that Mr. Gregory had dropped in the course of a former conversation, had not been lost on me. He had mentioned Mr. Robert Walsh, our consul in Paris, as his means of communication with Mr. Bainrothe, in speaking of that person's delay in Paris to Captain Wentworth. I determined, now that the time of my emancipation was so near, to make our consul *my* medium as well with regard to Mr. Gerald Stanbury, whose impetuosity I had dreaded too much to risk my safety earlier, on the hazard of his discretion.

I wrote to Mr. Stanbury, therefore, immediately entreating him to satisfy my mind in regard to the welfare of Mabel and Mrs. Austin and giving him my address at Savannah, to the care of General Curzon. I told him why I had dropped my father's name for a season retaining only that of my mother (conferred on me at the font), and begged him to assist me in preserving my incognita until the time of my majority should arrive.

I knew that for the few intervening weeks, between the receipt of my letter and the fulness of time, he could command himself to reticence. But I should have been apprehensive of a volcanic outburst, had the destined delay been longer. I ended by requesting him to meet me in my father's house on the day of my majority, there to share my triumph and the confusion of my enemy. For still the Judaic spirit abode with me (so utterly vanquished now by the grace of God), and the thought of my revenge was almost as sweet to my soul as the hope of my happiness. I heard the cymbal sound above the full orchestra.

What stirred me like the song of Deborah, "that grand, tumultuous poem," as Wordsworth called it, full of the ebb and flow of war, the tidal grandeur of the avenger's tri-

umph! Had I been born in those days, I too might have been hard, cruel, remorseless as Esther in the pursuit of my revenge, and borne with smiles like Judith the head of Holofernes in a charger; or driven like Jaël the tent-nail into the temples of Sisera. From this God saved me, yet I have often felt that my being was an anachronism.

CHAPTER XXII.

ABOUT this time a necessity arose on Madame Lavigne's part, which she thought I alone could meet in her stead and on this point we met in counsel and joined issue. Unable herself from indisposition, which still confined her to her own apartments, to attend to her summer shopping in Savannah, she begged me to go in her place and select the clothing of her daughters, a matter with her of much choice and consideration. Style and fashion were her harmless hobbies. She had never lost sight of her New Orleans training, and the memory of her rare and elegant trousseau had been her guiding star through the clouds of her toilette simplicity and necessitated immurement at Lesdernier.

There was question, too, of mourning for herself and elder daughters to be worn for Mrs. Favrand. That this might be of the finest texture and most *recherchè* mode, was her especial desire. It was a point of honor with her that she from whom their fortune came, should be correspondingly deplored; and no expense, or pains, or taste, were to be spared in the selection of material and the fashioning of garments for this purpose.

So Marion and I were deputed, under guard of Major Favrand and Mr. Gregory (the latter again admitted to outside toleration), to proceed to Savannah and acquit ourselves worthily of this important commission. One that I undertook, I confess, with zeal and pleasure, for any change promised relief to my spirit from the almost insupportable gloom which in the brightness of its fortunes overshadowed for me the abode of Beauseincourt.

I understood now what I had only felt before, the wierd wisdom of that striking portraiture of despair in the remarkable book called Vathek, typed by the burning heart, beneath the ordinary guise of humanity. The halls of Eblis seemed to me renewed in the once peaceful abode into which my strange fortunes had cast me, bound and powerless through the irresistible force of circumstance.

It was summer now in that region, and our journey was to be prosecuted by slow stages, in the old-fashioned, heavy coach, with its clumsy horses, that represented the establishment of Beauseincourt, topped with its dashing coachman and tiny tiger, arrayed in woe-begone, faded livery, no longer relevant to its brilliant fortunes.

"We will change all that soon," said Walter Lavigne, with a slight, almost supercilious, smile curling his lips as he stood at sunrise on the granite steps of his paternal mansion and surveyed the approaching equipage for which Marion and I stood waiting in the hall.

It was a very expressive little bit of soliloquy, accompanied by an impatient shake of the small, beautifully placed head, covered as this was with truly hyacinthine curls of golden brown hair, that gleamed in the red rays of the morning sun falling around him, like a halo.

"May that nimbus prove prophetic of his fortunes!" I inly prayed, as his sweet, bright face was turned to me flushed with the suggestive train of thought and promise that the dilapidation of ancient trophies had given rise to.

"You must help us choose our new livery, Miss Harz, you have so much more taste than we hermits and sailors could possibly possess. And King deserves better raiment in his sovereign estate. What shall it be? Lincoln green, or Mazarine blue, with a gold hatband and cockade in either case, or simply chocolate brown? But there is no time to decide now. I see the trunks are lashed on, and King is cracking his whip impatiently. Steady, boys, steady," to the horses, restive from want of exercise. "Now get in first, Miss Harz. Sylphy, where is the lunch-basket? Why you must have forgotten Favrand and Gregory in your estimate, and prepared to entertain canary birds! They will join you at the great gate in that notable tandem of the Major's, and you will enter Savannah in style. Queens with outriders! Don't forget my watch-key, Marion," as

he handed her in. Happy people attach such consequence to trifles!

"I shall attend to it, and all else, be sure, and you, in turn, must take care of mother, Walter. She must take her tonic regularly, remember. Besides you must read to her whenever Madge is engaged, that book of essays, you know. And if Mr. Vernon is here," faltering and coloring a little, then gaining sudden courage to proceed," entreat him kindly, for my sake, dear brother. She buried her face a moment on his shoulder, and kissing each other affectionately they parted ostensibly. But we found the light-hearted fellow at the gate, hatless when we arrived there and out of breath, for he had run rapidly across the lawn to open it himself and say a merry word or two before he lost sight of us again. We saw him standing on the massive gate-post as we turned into the road, like a statue of youthful expectation, rather than hope (for the coming guest Prosperity was already on his way — a certainty, not a dream), poised in his graceful, joyous beauty, where once a great unsightly granite ball had rested; now broken and lying in the grass covered with green mould and moss, never to be reinstated; a mere plaything henceforth for time.

"He is so delightful!" I said, "I have never known any one with so fresh and breezy a nature, so thoroughly gifted with the power of enjoyment! A rare gift in itself;" and I murmured the first lines of Shelley's sweet strain irresistibly, —

> "Rarely, rarely comest thou,
> Spirit of delight!"

while Marion demurely read over her mother's memorandum in her practical, patient way, noting every item.

BOOK SIXTH.

BOOK SIXTH.

"My solitude is solitude no more
But peopled with the furies!"

BYRON'S MANFRED.

"Avaunt! and quit my sight. Let the earth hide thee;
Hence, horrible shadow! Unreal mockery, hence!"

MACBETH.

"These are foul vapors, Aureole. Nought beside
The effect of watching, study, weariness."

BROWNING'S PARACELSUS.

"Mistrust yourself,
Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on him,
He is old, quiet, kind, and densely stupid."

BROWNING'S PIPPA PASSAS.

'The curse of heaven lies upon our house,
'Tis dedicate to ruin. Even *me*
My father's guilt drags with it to perdition.
My souls's benighted, I no longer can
Distinguish the right track. Mourn not for me
My destiny will quickly be decided."

SCHILLER'S DEATH OF WALLENSTEIN.

"You see how blood,
Must wash the blot away. To the vain world
All's gules again! You hold our 'scutcheon up
No blot upon it! Name and fame are yours:
Vengeance is God's, not man's. *Remember me.*"

THE BLOT ON THE 'SCUTCHEON.—BROWNING.

"And as when passing from the wrecks it doomed
Desolate sets in deeps of clouds, Orion,
The *grand destroyer*, went his way forlorn
Through glimmering darkness."

BULWER'S LOST TALES OF MILETUS.

BOOK SIXTH.

CHAPTER XXIII.

INSTEAD of one week, the intended limit of our visit when we left "Lesdernier," a fortnight, passed in Savannah, went by like a dream. A few days of indisposition on Marion's part had delayed our shopping expedition on our first arrival. After this was accomplished, the rites and snares of hospitality detained us, not unwilling to be so fettered.

General Curzon's house was the nucleus of a delightful society, in the midst of which he moved, the cynosure of all eyes, the man of heart, and brain, and culture, as well as of wealth and influence; truly "le vieu aimè;" for on him was conferred that gift of magnetism, without which no man can truly be called popular.

It was evening when we rëentered the quiet gate at Beauseincourt, and when we reached the house the crescent moon was riding high above the tree-tops; still the bland radiance of the summer sunset disputed the sceptre of night and the stars broke out one by one, like guests that come too early to a festival.

Standing like a motionless fixture of the spot, a statue guarding the vestibule, perhaps, from intrusion, on the broad, granite steps that led to the front door, was that same graceful figure we had seen poised like an acrobat on the great stone gate-post, all life and joyous animation as we left the grounds of Beauseincourt.

Even in the imperfect light I saw the change that had passed over it as visibly in its expressive outlines as we behold a bird droop his pinions, before he falls to the ground,

under the dart of the archer, instead of closing them for a voluntary descent. The mournful voice, the feeble greeting confirmed my instantaneous expression that Walter was ill at ease. Where was the ringing tone? Where the sailor-like heartiness of hand and manner, the bouyant demeanor of two weeks before? Where the expected welcome?

He helped us mechanically to descend from the coach and scarcely noticed the outstretched hand of King, his foster brother, with his grinning "How's you, Marster Walter? how's all at home?" the stereotyped negro greeting for such occasions. He silently escorted us up the steps and into the empty hall, through which the broken skylight cast some lurid, crimson beams of departing day. One of these fell on his face and I saw that it was pale and locked, and that he looked like his own spectre as one might imagine it. Had he been ill? What had befallen him?

I paused at the foot of the staircase, which Marion lightly ascended to her mother's chamber, for Madame Lavigne was still an invalid we knew from letters received in our absence, nor had Marion in her girlish eagerness for home, observed Walter as closely as I had. Mr. Gregory had gone home with Major Favrand and we two were alone in the hall, and still I lingered.

"What is the matter, Walter?" I asked, at last. "What has gone wrong? Is your mother ill?"

"No, no, no, nothing of the sort; you can satisfy yourself, very soon of that, however," pausing abruptly with his hand to his brow.

"Madge, Bertie, then? the children?"

He shook his head mutely at every several enquiry.

"All well," "all happy, I believe, which is better; may they remain so!" he said, at length.

"You are ill yourself then, Walter, or is it, *is it*, your father?"

God knows had I loved that man for whom I enquired, like my own life, instead of shrinking from his very shadow as I did, my heart could not have beat more wildly, my voice dropped more suddenly, than when I asked that question; nor could my interest have been greater in the reply, long waited for, before it came, slowly, huskily at last from the young, laboring breast.

"Yes, it is he; but ask me no more just now, Miss Harz. Come to me presently. I know not what to think, to dread,

what to believe yet. You can help to enlighten me, perhaps, by the grace of God ; you only."

He turned away with a suppressed groan, and disappeared in the shadow. Spell-bound, aghast, I stood, rooted to the spot, feeling at that moment an ominous foretaste of horror, my hand still resting on the massive baluster, unconscious of thought or time for many minutes, when I heard the voice of Bertie calling me from above, and I ascended the staircase mechanically.

The scene that met my view when I entered Madame Lavigne's chamber was one surely calculated to dispel any fears that might have possessed me with regard to her happiness or that of her daughters. It appeared to be one of unmixed domestic felicity.

Around the arm-chair of their mother, smiling in the beatitude of her nearly completed recovery and novel prospects, and the joy of our return, the group of girls was clustered, all but Bertie, who led me by the hand towards it, very quietly now, after having nearly smothered me with embraces at the head of the staircase. Marion was unfolding a rich, black, heavily fringed, Canton crape shawl, which she had brought for her mother by Walter's especial order, for already several of the cartons we had entrusted to Sylphy's care, were in process of examination, and that worthy maiden on her knees,before another, of larger dimensions, was diligently engaged untying its multifarious cords as we entered.

"Welcome! my dear Miriam," said Madame Lavigne, extending her arms to me. "See, I cannot rise, I am a living counter piled with goods ;" embracing me fondly, as did Madge, Laura, and Louey in turn.

In the arms of the two last, I left great wax dolls I had bought them ; the "Rose," and the Blanche of their dreams, one a radiant blonde in blue, the other a brilliant brunette in pink ; young ladies who had come from New York, I assured them, on the last packet ; a statement that greatly enhanced the value of the visitors in their eyes. Nothing quite so *recherchè* and beautiful had ever before graced their repertoire of dolls, and they hastened to enthrone them as queens of that establishment.

All this was in vivid contrast to what I had left below in the dim and dreary hall; the disconsolate young man, over whom a blight had seemed to fall as suddenly as it

drops upon a flower in one night in the time of frost. Again I watched wistfully and narrowly every face, every tone, to find some traces of congenial, if hidden, feeling in the group before me. But the illumination which Felicitè instituted in honor of our arrival, revealed only countenances beaming with delight and expectation, and from what I knew of those open natures, I was convinced, after my survey, that Walter was alone in his despair, for such indeed seemed the nature of his unexplained sorrow, the dark and bitter source of which I trembled to conjecture.

"How is your father, Madge?" I asked, as carelessly as I could, while we stood apart conversing, after the first, clamorous greetings were over.

"Oh, about as usual; busy about nothing, half his time, the rest reading or dreaming in his library, of which he has made, since mother's illness, you know, "parlor, bedroom, and hall," like the cobbler in the old song 'who lived in a stall.' We see less of him, of course, than ever. Three or four times a day he comes and solemnly taps at mother's room door, enquires of her health, then vanishes again into thin air. He even eats alone, most of the time. He is the most spectral old gentleman I ever have been acquainted with, the most unsocial!"

"And Walter? do you think he is quite well Madgo? He lookedbadly to me, as well as I could see in the twilight."

"No, he is not quite well evidently. He misses 'the sea, the sea, the open sea,' I imagine, in this cooped up solitude of ours. Moreover he misses Mr. Wentworth, and did miss Mr. Gregory and you while you were gone, and cheerful Major Favrand of whom he is very fond. When I say cheerful, I don't mean it as a reproach at all, one might as well revile a katydid for clamoring forevermore about his 'broken bottle,' as our bouyant relative for laughing and talking continually even in the depth and newness of his affliction. By the bye, what sort of a beau did you find Mr. Gregory?" twisting her guard-chain nervously.

"Quite attentive enough to satisfy reasonable people. We had others, remember," I replied, carelessly.

"Oh, I can't doubt that for one moment," speaking nervously. "Mr. Vernon has been here quite often of late, too. I like him very much on closer acquaintance; but, I own, I can't quite make him out."

"He is no mystery, Madge, notwithstanding."

"I know you are his friend, Miss Harz; I know how"—

Here all further parley was cut short by the bustling entrance of Felicitè with the tea-tray, for Marion and myself, supper having been discussed before our arrival, and our long delayed coming being a matter of some uncertainty on that particular evening.

As no occasion presented itself for an especial descent to the lower story that evening, I determined to put off an interview with Walter, till the following morning and went early to my chamber with my usual room-mate, Bertie. She was soon sleeping profoundly; indeed her repose was ever more like lethargy than common slumber, and her appearance when asleep, as I think I have said before, that of statuesqe tranquillity. She had been sleeping in her mother's chamber, too, I knew, during my absence,and was glad to get back to the old quiet nest once more, undisturbed by the coming and going of servants and children. Her slumber seemed evenm ore than usually profound on this occasion.

I was too uneasy to repose at first. Fatigue, as it ever did, had rendered me nervous and restless. Such a crowd of images filled my brain, that in self-defence I went to the light, and tried to read, and thus induce slumbrous inclination by substituting one excitement for another.

The book, I remember, was the exquisite "Evangeline," then newly published, and I had succeeded fully in fixing my attention when I heard my name distinctly called from the lower gallery in the voice of Walter Lavigne.

"Miss Harz! Miss Harz!" in a loud whisper of eager entreaty as it seemed to me. "Come down for one moment, if possible,—one only," and the voice was still.

I did not, could not, hesitate when, after an interval, the prayer was repeated. I lost no time in throwing on a light wrapper over my bed-gown, and thrusting my bare feet into slippers, went quietly out of the open door into the balmy night, and crossing the gallery to the stairway, soon found myself by the side of Walter Lavigne. The library windows that gave on this lower portico were open, and I saw within by the light of the lamp, the tall form of Colonel Lavigne moving restlessly up and down the apartment. The gallery itself was only partially distinct in the clear starlight. The crescent moon was dropping behind the trees, yet I could see in its waning light the pale face of the young man as he

turned toward me, almost imploringly, ghastly white and convulsed with agony.

"It has been thus for three nights," he whispered, as he laid his clammy hand on mine and drew me on, "I cannot persuade him to undress or lie down, and I must not, dare not leave him. Perhaps the presence of a stranger may do him good, restrain him. Have you nerve enough to encounter him?" Then after a moment's pause he whispered, "he is drinking fearfully."

"No, Walter," I said, drawing back, much relieved by this announcement which changed the character of my apprehensions, and seemed to cover the whole ground of the young man's wretchedness, for I knew his keen and honorable susceptibility to shame. "No, Walter, you must excuse me, indeed! I have not the nerve for such an emergency. Send for Doctor Durand, Major Favrand, male friends; their counsel and experience will be worth everything to you."

"Doctor Durand! Major Favrand! of all men. Oh! if you did but know!" and he clasped his hands wildly across his brow. "No, you must come, if you wish to save me from madness. He refers even to you sometimes, perhaps you can explain" — he hesitated, and for my part I trembled visibly.

"No, no, dear young friend, I can be of no service in any way. I am singularly afraid of inebriates, and woman is out of place here. I have never been accustomed to anything of the kind. I am totally inexperienced, I assure you. Let me go back; besides that, how would he feel, were he to come to the consciousness that I had seen him in such a situation? he a proud man? You have faithful servants, Walter, call King and Jura."

"They must not hear," he whispered, "no, not for worlds! It is too horrible," closing his hand on mine like a vice; "this fancy or whatever it is that possesses him. I know not what to think! If Wentworth were here, I should appeal to him at once for aid, and to me you stand as his representative. You have strength, feeling, discretion, and," putting his hand to his head, "I know not where else to turn. My mother, my sisters, must be screened; and you will help me do this, I know, for the sake of all; don't leave me Miriam!" catching my hand imploringly, then dropping it nervelessly.

"What shall I do then to serve you? Command me, Walter;" I said, much moved.

"Stand quietly in the shadow until he comes. Then we shall see! My God! if Bertie were to hear him! She is in your chamber now, I believe."

The tightened pressure of his hand upon my arm proclaimed his excitement, as in another moment Colonel Lavigne emerged from the library, wearing his worn, brocaded dressing-gown, his feet in slippers, with hair wildly disordered, and his long, thin, collarless throat divested of the stock which usually embraced it. He was laughing horribly to himself and muttering as he advanced, altogether a fearful spectacle!

"It is delirium tremens, Walter, no doubt; I have heard of that dreadful malady. He ought to have immediate advice," I said, shrinking involuntarily.

"Judge for yourself first," he whispered, "whether such revelations or ravings, call them what you will, ought to be committed, carelessly, to the conjectures of a physician. I repose this confidence in you as solemnly as I would lay my dead in their grave; be you as silent as that resting place."

Shivering with nervous apprehension I watched the motions of Colonel Lavigne. He was advancing towards me now, and I clung to one of the columns of the gallery and leaned my head against it, still sustained by Walter's grasping hand.

Hamlet himself had never a wilder mien, when he listened to the ghost, than this noble youth, hearkening to the unconscious revelations of this madman, this weir-wolf of his, in paternal guise; this father he had loved so well and revered so entirely, devoted now to shame and execration.

"See, where she goes again!" said the madman, pointing forth with his long, lithe finger, and straining his eyes in the same direction. "Why doesn't the old black hell-cat take better care of her? Drunk again, eh? But she did not smell the morphine, I suppose; how should she? Get up, I tell you, Sabra, and take the poor wretch home. She might as well die in her bed. I never knew how much she ate of the melon," muttering low, "enough to give the devil his own, though, it seems. My God! what a monster, an accident, not an intention! Poh, poh, Celia, don't take it so hard! Doctor Lucas, forsooth! what does he know

about a disease like this? It would take Durand to scent the truth! The old medical fox, off the track this time, though! *Ha! ha!* Asiatic cholera! Asiatic cholera, indeed! Humbug! I know this disease of old, it is a peculiar one, but I understood it, and so did the old man," laughing low, "but he was tough and wary, and possessed the antidote. Well, well! what a revenge he took, 'noblesse oblige,' though. Silent, silent, for honor's sake, as the tomb, all the while! Yet I baffled him, at last! Ha, ha!" And he paced the gallery with long and rapid strides, so far without observing us, laughing horribly.

"Go to him, Walter," I entreated, hiding my face, "persuade him to go in; this is too, *too* horrible!"

Low as the whisper was, this time he caught it, turned, and swiftly advanced with his hands behind him, peeringly towards us, bending forward as he came.

"Whom have you there, Bellevue? Is that you, Miriam Harz, you ubiquitous little Yankee? Come out of the shadow, girl! and let me look right into your truth-telling eyes!"

And that vice-like grasp again dragged me forth by the arm, to confront the lamp by the window, — a trembling wretch, gasping like a guilty thing in the hand of the righteous!

"Father! father!" remonstrated Walter, as he indignantly strove to remove his hand from its clutch. "This is too bad, sir! Desist! desist instantly!"

"Let him alone," I said, as calmly as I could, recovering myself by a strong impulse, "Colonel Lavigne would not injure me for the world. He knows his friends. Be quiet, for God's sake, Walter!" I whispered, "you will only make things worse, don't exasperate him. Patience and courage now!"

"Little liar! you are no friend of mine, but an infernal foe!" and he shook me slightly. "Who locked the gate that day? and why did the dog carry the key to you before my face? Answer me!" again shaking me, spasmodically.

"Colonel Lavigne, this is unmanly," I remonstrated.

"Well, I believe it is," laughing low and relaxing his hold upon my arm, deused unmanly. But I am all unnerved, somehow or other, unstrung to-night, as you see," passing his hands over his brow and eyes. "And that wretch *will* follow me! You are a very good girl, Miriam

Harz, in your commonplace way and know how to hold your tongue, I believe. But those eyes of yours tell tales, out of school, sometimes. I have seen them grow as big as saucers (I have, upon my word, Walter, without exaggeration) just straining at me. The girl does not understand my dual nature. There are two of us, spiritual Siamese twins! That is the truth of it. Two Prosper Lavignes, both in one body: one is an evil fiend, the other, a princely gentleman," — the last words, slowly, sadly spoken.

"Oh, father, father!" and he moaned aloud.

"Well, it can't be helped now, you see; it is what the French call a '*fait accompli.*' Isn't that the right accent, little schoolmarm? Oh, these Yankees! they find out everything and always carry their point in time. But I will represent you as an abolitionist, madam," speaking fiercely and shaking his head, "if you dare to open your lips; denounce you, and swear that you have been tampering with my slaves! Do you hear that?" lifting his long, lithe forefinger before me threateningly, "lay it to heart, madam, or you may be burnt alive yet, like some of your puritanic progenitors, for a witch."

"Let me go now, Walter," I entreated, "I cannot bear this scene a moment longer. I *will* not bear it. I am faint and heart-sick."

"No, no, not until you look at *her* once more!" exclaimed Colonel Lavigne, catching my low appeal to Walter, "There, there she goes!" he whispered, huskily, closing his hand tightly again upon my arm, "she had no soul, you know, to save; no vital flame; only a will-o'-the-wisp existence, and that essence will glide about this vicinity forever, having no appointed 'biding place, My God! drive her away, girl! give her anything she wants. Melons? why, of course she shall have as many as she can devour. Gold too! if she cares for it," laughing feebly. "Anything, anything for peace!"

Frozen with horror I stood and listened, though his grasp was loosened now.

"But if that were all! Celia, Celia! cousin, get out of your grave! Don't say I laid you there! Be just, be merciful, the blow was not meant for you. Oh, darling, darling! it was weak and childlike to lament so." His whole manner was changed now, and his voice one of exquisite pathos for a moment. "Relief for all, if you could have thought

it! You know, my dear," speaking fast and sharply again "that necessity has no law, and you called me your brother in dying! I shall never forget that, nor the look, never, never! Hot coals, of course! Oh, God, Cain also was a brother! yet he slew Abel!" and he wreathed his long, thin arms about his head and groaned aloud.

"Lead him away, Walter. He is relaxing now. Give him laudanum; it is best. Let him sleep and forget! His brain has been overtaxed of late. These fancies possess him, you see instead of the ordinary ones of snakes and demons. Be comforted, dear Walter, attach no importance to what he says, it is unmeaning; but keep it to yourself, you are right there. And I will assist you to the utmost; be firm. Good-night, God bless you. Yes, you *must* spare me now."

I left him to his weary, woeful charge and self-appointed vigil and buried my face in my pillow, weeping the long night hours away.

I was too ill the next morning to leave my chamber — ill with one of those nervous chills and rigors that seemed to have succeeded the old form of lethargy with me, after excitement of any kind, and which, thanks to Doctor Durand, I had learned to manage myself.

Heat is the remedy which usually accomplishes for me the most beneficial results, though that chilliness that is felt to the very marrow, yields very slowly to its powerful opponent. I suppose plants have some such phase of feeling when spring influences pervade them, after being frozen up all winter, and serpents and other lower vitalities, in rousing from torpor as I then experienced.

Colonel Lavigne was also too much indisposed, Sylphy said, to come forth that morning from his immurement, and I heard at intervals his low, stormy voice, varied by Walter's pleading intonations, ascend from the library below, into my quiet chamber. Towards evening there was a profound lull, however, and Walter had left him, Marion said, at last sleeping quietly, and had himself retired to rest.

"They have business together that absorbs them," Madge added, "and father has overrated his energies, brother thinks, and brought on one of his old headaches. He has not been to call on mother to-day, and she is quite anxious. But you know 'Migraine,' is equal to death doom while it lasts, even if not dangerous. He will be up and bright to-

morrow no doubt. Walter constituted himself nurse and physician with father's consent and would admit none of us to share his labors. When I suggested Doctor Durand, he said, 'nonsense, nonsense,' so petulantly that it frightened me, as peevishness always does from amiable people. Adding after a moment, however, as if in apology, 'that good man has enough riding to do and real disease to cure, without being called out of his way for a mere nervous headache. You are all much too exacting of him and inconsiderate for others who are more ill, in this regard, I think.' Then he closed the door in my face and betook himself to smotherment again in that sealed-up library, where I suppose after all, he was of very little use. When I have Migraine myself, all I want is peace and darkness until it lifts itself off."

"But father is so highstrung," urged Marion.

"I am thankful to be a Benôit," said Madge, demurely, "more comfortably commonplace!"

CHAPTER XX.

IT rained that night, I remember, and whether it was that some impurity was washed out of the atmosphere in this way, or that the pleasant freshness of the morning gave us all renewed life, the breakfast table was that day, for the first time the rendezvous for all the invalids of Beauseincourt.

The recuperation after sickness in the young and strong is a very delightful sensation. It is the "being born again," physically, that religious people talk about in another sense, and renews happiness along with vitality. I felt like a new creature as I entered the dining-room on that divine morning really the first of summer, and could not repress a little scream of delight, as I saw Madame Lavigne, very unexpectedly to me, seated behind the coffee urn once more, radiant in smiles and arrayed in a rose-colored em-

broidered morning wrapper, peculiarly becoming. Her mourning was not yet made up and her invalid condition exempted her from its dreariness for a season, fortunately for her complexion.

I was myself carefully dressed in buff cambric, (a favorite and becoming color of mine,) and we two alone relieved the sable monotony of the younger and fairer portion of the household.

"I hate black," said Colonel Lavigne, glancing at us both approvingly, "it is only fit for priests and ravens."

He seated himself as complacently before his steaks, broiled teal ducks and fragrant omelet, as though the enacted horrors of the last few nights had not traced themselves in his haggard face and left undying records in the minds of others.

"But where is Walter?" he asked, looking round a little anxiously. "Has Bellevue overslept himself," (for so he affectedly called Walter of late), "on this first day of his birth month? In fifteen days, ladies, I have the honor to inform you, Walter Lavigne will come of age, and," rubbing his hands, self-gratulatingly, "we shall then proceed to put in practice a great political axiom by making the majority happy. Our mourning prevents any effusion on the part of the minority. The negroes shall on that occasion enjoy a Roman Saturnalia. And now, what part of the duck will you have, Miss Harz?"

Walter entered immediately after this speech and announcement, somewhat pallid and languid-looking, and tossing his hat down on a sofa near him, sat down to table without a word. This was very unusual for him, so courteous, so cheerful usually as he was, to one and all.

"You are not well, my son," said Colonel Lavigne, "your eye is heavy. What ails you, Bellevue?"

"No, sir, not at all well, I sat too late on the porch, in the damp, last night, I fancy. I am a little chilly this morning and have a bad headache," leaning his head on his hand, "but it will pass off, probably."

"Walter, my son," said Colonel Lavigne, with a composure that could not have been assumed, "how often must I warn you of the danger of night-damps in this climate. Go directly and take quinine. You will find powders weighed and labelled in the medicine chest; here is the key," handing it to King, "and guard against congestion,

very rife at this period. Your life is not your own any longer, it belongs now to your family. You understand your own value now."

"He is the golden calf," whispered Bertie, "or the golden goose, which?" unheard by all save Madge and myself. "We must make a ring and dance around him, before Aaron comes."

The eye of Walter Lavigne dwelt for a moment with an expression of relieved astonishment on his father's face, then wandered across the table enquiringly to mine, where he must have read a very puzzled expression in response, and finally dropped upon the antique spoon wherewith he was stirring his coffee languidly.

"Let me take my coffee first, and I will obey you afterwards, father," was all he said in answer.

"Coffee is in itself a specific against chills," observed his mother; "finish it, my son, while it is strong and hot."

"He rose early from table and as he passed my chair bent down and whispered, "Can I see you a few minutes on the gallery, after breakfast?" His breath was hot on my cheek. I bowed in token of assent, and he left the room. He must have sought the medicine his father recommended on his way to his chamber, for a few moments elapsed before we heard a heavy fall on the platform at the head of the stair. King sprang up the steps, with the speed of lightning, and found his young master lying senseless on the floor, with the powders in his hand. The over-taxed boy had fainted.

There succeeded a week's illness. Fever, delirium, ensued, fortunately of that low, muttering kind which betrays nothing, and is yet so much more appalling than out-spoken mania; then great and complete exhaustion threatening the citadel of life itself, and after all this was over, the calm of approaching convalescence stole over the scene, when the cords of existence are being slowly gathered up again, by the hand of health — slowly yet surely.

Even I who so loathed his crime and its consequences, pitied Colonel Lavigne, during the two days when the verdict of Doctor Durand, the wary pilot of this fever craft, hung suspended above his head, like the sword of Damocles.

He sat like a statue of woe or moved like an "*âme damnèe*," about the house, without a purpose. Yet if he remem-

bered aught of his own mental aberrations, he proved himself still a master in self-command; for no expression of his with regard to the past or reference in connection therewith, ever so remotely hinted at such consciousness, then or thereafter. The oracle was dumb.

When Walter was better he sent for me to come to him alone, under the pretence of requesting me to read to him. The book was never opened, but instead, I sat an hour conversing with him calmly on that fearful hallucination of his father's, which had prostrated him for a season, and which still recurred to his mind as a matter involved in mystery and requiring elucidation. His was the initiative.

"It is my earnest advice to you, Walter," I counselled, "to drop the whole matter, mentally even, from this hour; your father evidently retains no consciousness of what has passed, which is in itself a proof of the chimerical nature of the fancy. He is a nervous, eccentric man, whose brain has been highly wrought by the pressure of mixed emotions; and what we heard and beheld we must try and consider only as an enacted vision. Which of us is there who has not dreamed of monstrous things? Which of us is there who has not been calmly guilty in his slumbers of deeds any one of us would have shrank from in our waking moments? ay, viewed with loathing!"

"Yet look at Lady Macbeth, her dream was truth," he murmured, "and Shakspeare is the master!"

"Let me give you an instance in point," I said evasively. "I dreamed not long ago that I was walking by your side on the banks of 'Minorca Lake' in the swamp of Lesdernier, which you once so vividly described to me. In my mental vision the lilies from which it takes its name were all in bloom, covering it in patches, as it appeared, with their dark green leaves and large, chalice-shaped, snow-white blossoms, more beautiful and delicate by far than the specimens you have shown me. There was one great cypress tree near the shore standing knee deep in water, throwing a black shadow straight before it. The rest was all in light, dazzling light it seemed to me, and beneath this tree and in its shadow, a little boat was moored, containing one man, whose face we could not see, he kept it so near the water as he bent over the boat, intent on something below. His back too was turned to the shore. We stood some time looking at him carelessly. Then you said, 'I have half a mind to cut that

rope and let him drift out on the lake; see! he has neither oars nor helm, and could never get back to shore again. There is, too, a leak in the boat, and he would sink presently; this would be such fun!' I encouraged you to do it, calling it a brave deed, which in my distorted sense, with or without reason, it truly seemed to be. I then saw you draw your knife, cut the rope and he drifted out, unimpeded by the lily pads through which the sharp keel cut, and which closed behind it as it passed, like water. Presently the boat began to settle down. We knew that he was sinking, and he stood up and stretched his arms to the shore, entreating aid and laughing horribly, and then disappeared from sight.

"By and by the vision changed. You and I were in the little boat, looking down into the clear water between the tufted lilies, and far below with his hands crossed and his face looking upward as if in sleep, the man lay life like, and we knew that he was drowned. But we felt no pity nor remorse. 'It was a good deed,' you said, 'else how would we ever have got possession of the boat, and seen the lilies?'

"And I answered, 'Well done, Walter,' forgetting in the inconsistency of my dream that you had loosened and set adrift the boat which had gone down too with its solitary inmate."

"And the man?" he asked eagerly. "Who was the man you saw in the water? You saw his face, you say; what was it like?"

I answered without hesitation, "Oh, but we create faces you know in our dreams, just as we do incidents. I only related the dream to show you what mental obliquity, sleep sometimes engenders. Delirium does the same. 'Mania Impotœ' most of all. What person of sense ever attaches the slightest importance to the serpents, and demons, and grinning apes, men see, who have been permeating their systems with wine or alcoholic liquors?" Thus persuading him against my own convictions, I continued for a time mechanically. What better could I do?

"That is true," he said musingly, at the end of my discourse; "and now once for all, my dear Miss Harz, let us dismiss this subject from all consideration, and talk of ours forever. The films of approaching illness, no doubt deceived me and magnified what might else have seemed explainable on common grounds. It is so very recent a thing for my

father, who has sat down to his good wine all his life in moderation, to indulge to excess in drinking, that the very fact that he did so was in itself almost maddening to me. But my mother's protracted illness and his necessary absence from her soothing society, and these late dreadful family occurrences, as you say, his very elation about my prospects perhaps, acting upon his constitutional view of morbid melancholy, an inheritance from his father — may no doubt account for everything that has transpired. I love my father unusually; I believe, more than all else. I am almost ashamed to acknowledge this, since my mother is so much more perfect; but he made me his companion from childhood, and threw himself singularly upon my affection. I cannot remember ever to have received a harsh word from his lips; all the scolding and punishment, what little there was of either, devolved upon my poor mother, who never liked to do the one or the other, but who, to save him trouble and distress, would undertake anything in the shape of an unpleasant duty, you know."

"Yes, this is characteristic of her."

"You can understand, then, how I have been pained, shocked, and mortified, by this dereliction of his. But he has promised me, (I craved this pledge on my knees, Miss Harz), never again to lift the poisonous cup to his lips, and I know he will keep his word; he is a man of honor."

He faltered. "It was very bitter for me to depart so far from my established line of respectful conduct as to solicit this promise and to remind him of its necessity, but I felt it a solemn duty and accomplished it."

"All the mother's sense of duty there, with twice as much moral courage!" I thought, as I surveyed him admiringly, his large, blue eyes ablaze, his lips crimson with emotion.

"But you did not allude to those incoherent ravings, he himself had probably forgotten, Walter, I trust?" I asked, anxiously, eagerly.

"No, no, of course not, I consigned all that to silence, as he seemed determined to do, if he remembered it at all — silence inexorable as death. I must have been mad at the moment to call a witness to his proceedings; but your name occured so frequently in his ravings, that I hoped you might give me a clue to what seemed so inexplicable else, and you must pardon me if I selfishly involved you in my suffering." A moment later he added, "Your discretion, your honor,

are both beyond a doubt. You will never use these chimeras to his, or our disadvantage?"

"Never, Walter, rest assured of that. If I had deemed your father responsible for his words or opinions, think you I should have borne so calmly his opprobrious epithets? Personal feeling was all swallowed up in pity! amazement! incredulity!"

"This conversation has lifted a great load from my breast," he said, drawing a long, free breath, and extending his hand to me. "Best of friends, I thank you!" and now I believed him. Yet, after all, there was something grievous to me in these words, spoken as they were in low and broken accents at odds with his declaration of relief, that jarred in spite of my faith in them, on my very heart-strings.

Before I had time to respond to his remark in any way, the door opened softly and Doctor Durand entered, hat and riding whip in hand. "I did not know but you might be asleep, Walter, and seeing no one below, came up unbidden. How are you, my dear fellow? Remnant of chicken soup in the bowl, I see," peeping into the tureen; "very encouraging sign! Don't overdo it and eat too much now. It is a great error to overfeed the convalescent. Relapse and all that sort of thing the frequent consequence. Appetite comes when nature needs it, don't urge the old dame. "*Festina lente,*" my good boy is the best rule in the world for the patient on the road to recovery. But here is that infallible clairvoyant medical sister of mine; she knows all this by intuition, I'll warrant. How is she to-day?" (and he laid down his hat and whip to shake hands with me.) To which accusation of magical insight I made laughing dissent, calling him all sorts of merry names in return, for our mutual amusement and Walter's distraction; each more complimentary than the last. "Charlatan," Sangrado," among the rest.

"By the by," said Doctor Durand, sitting down by the bed with his fingers on Walter's wrist, "I must make the 'amende honorable' in poor old Sabra's case, while I think of it. She is dying; I have just left her bedside, and her expiring declarations exonerate her completely, in my opinion, from the accusations I brought against her; you remember them, Miss Harz. Your pulse is very good, Walter, this morning. I am altogether pleased with your condition;" and he settled himself for a talk, but in

such a position that I could not possibly catch his eye without shifting my own too suddenly to escape detection.

"Do you know, Walter, that I had the hard-heartedness to suspect that poor old thing of having poisoned her charge? As to Asiatic cholera, the more I think of that proposition of Lucas, the greater ass I am disposed to think him! The demon has not begun his rounds yet, and he never sends avant couriers so far ahead, though sometimes he leaves evil legacies. There has not been a single parallel or similar case to Marcelline's in this whole district!"

"Oh, but you might have been right for all that about Sabra," said Walter, raising himself suddenly on one arm, with an eager light in his eyes. "Do tell me what ground you have for your suspicions, I am all interest now."

"Lie down then, as a submissive, sick man should, and you shall hear. In the first place, the cantelope alone could never have caused the unconquerable thirst which is a distinctive feature of poison by arsenic, and when rejected from the stomach (it ought to have been analyzed then, by the by, but such a set of noodle-heads I have never heard of before, as met in medical conclave), would have left the system in a very different condition. 'Imprimis'" — and already one finger was laid across the other.

"For Heaven's sake, Dr. Durand," I said with asperity, after vainly trying to attract his attention in every possible way, (but there are men who are impervious to any hint less plain than the famous one of being kicked down stairs, and our good Doctor was certainly of this class). "For Heaven's sake, don't bore us with technicalities. They would cause me to relapse were I in Walter's condition, far sooner than chicken soup, I am certain; and as to your patient, don't you see he is nervous now?"

"Well, that is true. I spare you the details, my good friend, on such valuable suggestions, and pass to the results. I was so convinced at one time that this wretched woman had destroyed her charge and nursling, weary to death of the horror and monotony contained in her existence, (for even negroes have their choice of employment, you know,) and maddened by the liquor she drank, that I questioned her about it solemnly and sternly, immediately after announcing to her the fact that she had but a few days or even hours perhaps to live. She asseverated so fervently and firmly her complete ignorance and innocence of the deed, and at the

same time her superstitious belief in the interference of spirits in this work of destruction that I was obliged to believe in her innocence, and reluctantly seek elsewhere for a guilty party. Favrand too (who has never had a suspicion of this kind, however, and from whom I commanded her to religiously conceal her own impressions even,) saw and forgave her in my presence for what he considered gross dereliction from duty alone.

The poor wretch had, besides her banquet of half ripe cantelopes, — which never did the evil, — a crow's dose, no doubt — such as our negroes persist in preparing for the destruction of the arch-enemy of their roasting ears. The corn is just putting up, and it is in that stage it is pulled up by the cunning bird which Sambo aimed to destroy. This is my conviction. I have never yet seen a negro who refused to make a clean breast on a death-bed, and Sabra has always passed for a pious woman and been indeed the chief consolation in her troubles, of that sweet saint, her mistress.

"But the most singular part of the whole affair, and it shows how far the fetish idea still exists among negroes, I am about to tell you. (You will smile, no doubt!) She had suspended from her neck and hidden in her bosom a button which she declares to have been dropped upon her breast from the clothes of her old master, Armand Lavigne, as he stood that day above her, 'as tall as a poplar tree, an' wid great white wings 'as she expressed it, 'ready spread for flyin' and callin' ob Marcelline to go home wid him wore dere ain't no more misshaped people, nor ijiots, neider, an' she would be jist as pretty as her own dear mother.' And this she gave me as her dying pledge of truth and friendship both, conjuring me to preserve it forever. I wrapped it in a bit of paper and dropped it in my pocket to gratify her and other believers in spiritual visitors, and here it is. Behold the ghostly card!" and he handed it to Walter.

"You see it is of very antique form, an odd affair enough, and may have been lying in the grass for an age, just where she found it. But what ails you, my dear boy? The vinegar, Miss Harz! Good God! fainting? This will never do; There, lie quite still; fan him, Miss Harz, if you please;" and he administered some reviving drops that he found on the mantel shelf, and which had remained there since they were used on the first day of Walter's seizure.

"It was that dreadful story," I murmured; "why would

you persevere? Don't you already know the almost morbid horror of this whole family on that peculiar subject? Doctor, I warned you before about Bertie. Do be discreet in future."

"Don't scold then; your voice is not so sweet as usual. The evil is done this time, and nearly mended. I never thought you unamiable until to-day," a little sharply. "Walter, my dear fellow, are you better? Miss Harz, excuse me," as he resolutely turned his back upon me.

Had the Doctor seen the sad and deprecating eyes I bent upon him, he surely would have withdrawn his accusation, against which I could set up no defence.

"Could you but know all," I thought; "but I trust that may never be. Better any forfeiture of good feeling than such acknowledgment — such insight!"

In the confusion, the button rolled off the bed and was forgotten. Unseen by any one I possessed myself of it after Dr. Durand had left, which he did as usual, hastily, after his sitting was out, and always with a consciousness of having wronged himself or somebody else by tarrying too long in pleasant places; his poor horse, perhaps the greatest sufferer after all, on such occasions, as he urged him no doubt up and down hill, to an accelerated pace in order to retrieve what is never retrieved without sorrow to somebody or something; time wasted.

Is there a more repulsive task for the naturally candid and open mind than to be constrained to duplicity even in the cause of humanity or expediency? What had I to do with all this mesh of misery in which I felt myself inextricably tangled? Fate seemed to be a zoöphyte in this case, and to reach forth long, filmy fingers wherewith to wrap me around and draw me into this vortex of horror, of crime, of ignominy, or concealment; for between these last two lay the fortunes of the household of Beauseincourt.

That night after the whole house was wrapped in sleep, and fenced about by all the mysteries of a guilty wretch, setting forth on a mysterious errand — of crime or wrong doing of some sort, — with shaded lamp in hand, shield on finger, and bearing, like the beetle in Cock Robin, my long thread and needle about me, (not to make, however, but to save the making of a shroud, perhaps,) I stole to the closet under the staircase in which I knew Colonel Lavigne kept his hunting accoutrements hanging up, and sewed with my own trembling hands the missing button on his velveteen hunting suit,

securely and fast; then hied me back to bed with a lightened heart, and the consciousness of a mission accomplished!

After all, what fallacy greater than mere circumstantial evidence. Had it been my cameo pin, worn I remembered, on that morning, that peculiar pin with its head of Sappho, so finely graven, and which Gregory had so admired, the pin I had lost since in Savannah, from my throat in walking the streets; had it been this brooch (defective as the catch proved to have been not long afterwards) which the old woman had found in the grass and hoarded, instead of the plated button with the wild boar's head engraven on its surface, and the L. V. on the reverse side, what might not the conclusion have been?

There were, no doubt, other buttons of the same make and mould, gracing other hunting-suits of the Lavigne family; plenty of them on hand, perhaps as heirlooms, although the fashion was ancient if not obsolete; but a pin like mine, made to order in Italy, and a copy from an old bas-relief that my father had fancied and ordered, was not likely to be duplicated even in the largest city, far less in the remote settlement of Lesderniers. On such slight pivots as these, I repeat again, our fate turns sometimes, for good or ill, and thus fallible is human judgment.

I shivered at the risk my own imagination had arrayed before me.

As to Dr. Durand, his non-recognition of the button in question and its peculiar device, as connected with the hunting suit of Colonel Lavigne, puzzled me at first, until I reflected that although the grooves of their lives ran side by side, they were still essentially separate; and that it was perfectly probable that the hard-riding country Doctor, dashing along county roads, had never met the easy going planter, creeping out with his dogs and gun, on his own grounds only in quest of game, and, as was his custom, always on foot.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A NOTE consisting merely of a few lines, reached me by the return of the packet in which Captain Wentworth had made his voyage to New York, — a note vexatious in its very brevity. Why could he not have risked the repetition of what was lost to me by the carelessness of Mr. Gregory, rather than have so mystified me, I reflected in my first impatience. This note expressed only the great anxiety he felt to receive a direct answer to the questions contained in that which, unconsciously to its writer, lay with the catfish at Le Noir's landing, along with the pocket-book of his aide, the possibility of the miscarriage of which seemed never to have crossed his mind.

I wrote to him immediately to beg that he would repeat these important interrogatories by the very next mail, detailing to him at the same time the accident to Mr. Gregory that had deprived me of all clue to his meaning; and commenting a little severely on the cool indifference of that gentleman with regard to my loss. This note was placed in the letter-bag, which, by some strange chance, (the illness of Uncle Quimbo, as well as I remember), was conveyed to Mauriceville, at the saddle-bow of Mr. Gregory himself (so unsuccessful as a Mercury before, so obliging ever), and, as if a cruel fate or purpose pursued us both, this letter, I learned later, never reached Captain Wentworth. Then came an expectant lull, — broken at last by the reception of the most inexplicable epistle that ever mystified mortal or stirred conjecture to its fountain-head in feminine bosom. It ran as follows: —

"Two packets have come in from Savannah since my arrival in New York, and brought me no reply to the important questions I propounded in the note which you must long ago have received through the faithful hands of Greg-

ory. I greatly fear that the curtness of these queries and the severe ordeal through which you have had to pass by reason of their accompanying revelation, may have stunned you for a season, and so paralyzed your sensibilities (as they have wrung my own), that you hesitate to crown our sorrow by an avowal of the truth.

"Yet the *truth*, my Miriam, is all that remains to us, and for God's sake, withhold it not, whatever it may cost us. Alas! what grave, if not disastrous consequences, might it not have averted if earlier made plain. How proud and happy it might have made us once, how bitterly it blights us now! How shall we unwind the cord so closely wrapped around our hearts? How untie the subtle knot that binds us to bliss? How let go the golden past in view of the iron future? Without God's gracious help and inspiring counsel I know not, I confess, how these changes can be effected. Teach me courage, — teach me forbearance, — you who have proved yourself both strong and patient as woman seldom has before, — above all, answer me. Doubt is almost worse than madness now.

"In your hand are all the clues of my being. Compare and judge for yourself as to our relative position, and when all is ended, decide for both, for my heart so long desolate and unstirred, rebels sorely against this last decree of providence or fate, — be it what it may, — the master-stroke of our evil genius, perchance, directed to bewilder and overwhelm us.

"I dare not write to you as my distracted soul dictates; it would be folly, madness, crime. I dare not, must not entreat you to cut the gordian knot, by putting under foot the dreadful obstacle that divides us, flying to the outermost corners of the earth to dwell with me in defiance of all human laws or divine institutions. This would be, indeed, to wade through blood — our own blood — to seek our happiness, if such indeed could exist in minds like ours, separately from law and order.

"But of this no more. I will not repeat what I have already said in the note that must have reached you long ago. I shall remain here to receive your reply, for under present circumstances, I cannot return to Lesderniers, the scene of all my happiness; nor can you properly conceive, I fear, from your long silence, the insatiable yearning I feel to know the truth whatever it may be; for hope is still delu-

sive perhaps, yet none the less at times irrepressible. Lose no time in writing. I am living years instead of days in my anxiety, — waxing old in the uncertainty of my anguish. Or better still, in any case, come to me yourself, and give me strength by the serenity of your presence, to bear whatever fate may hold in store for both. If only once more, let me see you face to face. Fear no longer the power of the bold, bad man, from whom obscurity protects you now. Whatever betide, this much remains to me, at least, the privilege, however separated our lots may prove, to be your protector, your shield, your champion, while my heart continues to beat. Farewell.

Yours eternally,

WARDOUR WENTWORTH."

A page that seemed to have been torn purposely from a memorandum-book, and inclosed, fell from the letter or its envelope which after a time I stooped to pick up and read, with scarcely less bewilderment than the scroll itself.

"I have made every effort to trace this matter without the aid of Miriam, but so far unsuccessfully. I have met with no one who knew Mr. Monfort more than by name. He seems to have been a man singularly shy of society and the world. The house in which he resided has been pointed out to me. It stands closed and empty, as do those of his nearest neighbors. The old man, Morton, who had charge of it is no longer there. Whether dead or living I could not ascertain; and the char-woman engaged by Mr. Bainerothe, lives in an out-building and has some care of the premises. From her, nothing could be gathered. I feel completely baffled."

And this was all. The papers fell from my nerveless fingers.

What did it all mean? What? I held no clue to the solution of this mystery, and weeks must elapse, months perhaps, in the way Southern mails were then conducted, before it could be solved to my satisfaction, if indeed such a word might be applied to the termination of my happiness. To doubt Wardour Wentworth were a heresy, I felt, against Heaven itself; for to me he represented every quality that we esteem godlike and heroic. My fate alone was at fault; that doom which forbade the cup of joy to mantle

my lips, and sealed me an alien from happiness coincident with my existence, and inseparable from it forever more.

I sank on my knees, I remember, and uttering low, mournful cries, proclaimed at once my misery and submission, my despairing subjugation.

And it did indeed seem that in that very spell of inability — imbecility almost — so foreign from my nature, my fate asserted its supremacy. Had I written that day, a messenger about setting forth for Savannah would have carried with him my letter in time for the next packet, but I was so completely nerveless I could as soon have grasped Napoleon's sceptre as a pen or pencil, and I lay all day with my face pressed in my pillow, crushing my letter in my hand, as an escape-valve to bodily anguish, while I neither spoke nor thought intelligibly, weighed down by that "mass of many images," which has always been to me so oppressive an accompaniment of pain, mental or physical.

By the time I rose up from that trance of grief my mind was definitely made up to confront this obstacle in person, whatever it might be, as desperate men walk up to the cannon's mouth. I would take the next packet, that which was to sail twenty days later, and dissipate this mirage of my lover's brain, for such I vowed to believe it, as if will could compel belief, any more than love, the irrepressible two, which no bonds can hold, no menaces subdue, no bribery corrupt! Then with my letter folded in my bosom, (read and re-read as this was, until the words grew unmeaning to my mind, and my senses reeled before their monotony, and action became my one necessity,) I went about my daily tasks again with fierce conjecture preying on my vitals as did the hidden fox on those of the Spartan.

Anxiety, what torture like to thine! Surely, of all the furies, thou art the most unappeasable! Despair hath its own Dead Sea calmness, — remorse, its ebbs and tides, — but Anxiety, with her uplifted torch, her streaming locks, her pallid, wild-eyed face goes wearily and restlessly up and down the earth, hunting, like Ceres for her daughter, for that certainty which is to be found like Proserpine, alone, most often in hell! God save us from this fiend! I know not why it was that those words of poor Ophelia's recurred to me ever during this weary term of my probation, like a sad refrain of an unfinished song, heard only by snatches and eternally knelled by memory.

"Now let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungallèd play;
For some must watch and some must weep, —
So wears the world away."

There is comfort as well as torture oftentimes in such involuntary as well as irrelevant repetitions of the mind. But at times I gave way wildly in my solitude. Jean Paul Richter gives an account of a strange vision, "The Sceptic's Dream," I think he calls it, in which is pourtrayed the effect that the spiritual death of Christ would have upon his followers, and the utter forlornness of the world without such stay and trust. Oh think me not blasphemous if I acknowledge that this ever-recurring vision did seem to me at times a type of my own destiny, for to this radiant hope of mine, so inadequately shadowed forth in these pages, all else did indeed seem cold, barren, insufficient. It was my religion then, for I had little other, and the angel that was leading me to God, was this affection, the first earnest one that had been vouchsafed to me, and in comparison with which all others did indeed seem but dust and ashes. But from this dark strife of feeling, this inadequacy of conjecture, this reign of sleepless anxiety, I was roused as with a trumpet blast, to the terrific sorrows of others, still near and dear to me, by the claims of human sympathy once powerful in my nature. From the time of Walter's entire convalescence, at which period this strange blow was levelled at my heart, (at my reason almost, I might add), I had seen but little of him; of any one outside of the sphere of my duties. It was understood that I was indisposed, an idea that my appearance bore out well; for I started at my own reflection in the glass sometimes, so wan and woeful was it, and understood at last Queen Elizabeth's aversion to her mirror in her change of age.

Madame Lavigne had insisted on my seeing Doctor Durand, but this I had positively refused to do from the first, dreading his blunt acumen, so to speak, which made him often blunder so unexpectedly on the truth.

Mr. Gregory and Major Favrand were again in Savannah; Mr. Vernon much engaged in superintending the works in the swamp, and Walter entirely surrounded by his family, in his convalescence, so that even Bertie was less with me than usual, a relief greater than all the rest, to my feelings; for her supervision, incited as it was by affection itself, was at times, more intolerable to me than the scrutiny of an en-

emy could possibly have been. I had time to cleave to my suicidal wretchedness, when it pleased God to rouse me by a touch of his mighty, all-directing hand, to a renewed sense of what I still owed those fellow-creatures to whom my fate had bound me.

Let me recall the very hour when I received this summons. It is marked down in my heart with a black cross, never to be erased, until I stand at the judgment bar and am cleansed of all earthly tribulation by that same mighty touch which thrilled my life-springs then.

The lull of an intensely hot July afternoon was lying like lead over the whole face of nature when I heard the sharp sound of a horse's hoofs in the paved court below my chamber. I was lying, I remember, on my bed, the weary midday meal and school duties all being over, in the listlessness of utter misery, watching the motes that danced in that long line of sultry light which found its way through a crevice in the green jalousie to the distant floor, and almost magnetized my senses; when I was brought to my feet suddenly by the sound of that eager, dashing hoof-stroke, so irrelevant to the hour, the place, and the weather, that it startled me like a sudden voice heard at midnight, a cry of alarm.

"Doctor Durand, I suppose, and in hot haste, it seems," I murmured, as I gathered up the long hair that had swept across my pillow, and wreathed it listlessly around my head again. "Who is ill now, here or elsewhere? Our Jonah himself, perhaps, this time," and I shook my head; "would that it indeed were he — no other! Why tarries the hand of God to cast him forth? Alas! is there any justice here or hereafter?"

Bitter indeed is the mood that can engender thoughts like these in a youthful breast, but the "waters had indeed come over my soul," in that fearful interval of anxiety and grief. I was sitting quietly by the window striving for a breath of air when Sylphy entered almost breathless and somewhat excited.

"Mr. Vernon to see you, Miss Harz, and he seems in a perdigious hurry for a leisurely gentleman like him," said the domestic magpie. "He giv' me a shove of the shoulder w'en I stopped to make my manners to him, that cum nigh upsettin' ob me jis' at de foot ob de stairs, and says he must see you 'mejiantly."

Tell him he must excuse me this evening, Sylphy, unless — unless he has a letter for me. Let Miss Marion know that he is here. I am not dressed, you see."

"Neider is Miss Marion," she muttered, as she withdrew, "and fas' asleep at dat."

She returned a moment later, shutting the door carefully after her as she came in.

"He wants to see you, Miss Miriam, all alone by yourse'f, and dis is his 'scuse for de shove he gin me jis now," and unclosing her hand she revealed a small gold coin nestling deep in its hollow palm. "I allus knowed he was ob de fust quality, from de ways he had, and w'en all de res' ob de cullored family disposed his courtin' ob Miss Marion, I was de only frien' he foun' and I isn't gwine to turn agin him dis late in de day; but do git on your dress, Miss Miriam. I tells you w'at! dat man has got sumthin' on his mind dis time, some news to tell wuth hearin', and I's all cur'osity — no, not dat; ranxiety to know w'at *kin* be de matter, an' so is you, Miss Mirime, I sees dat by your colour now. But Massa Vernon! he looks mighty pale, I tells you all; an' de drops ob sweat stan's out on his face, like jew on a cabbage-leaf."

"He has been riding fast and far, Sylphy, and it is hot to-day. Did you give him water? There, hand me my belt, my collar; now, Sylphy, I am nearly ready."

"No, no, Miss Miriam, his han' was as cold as ice w'en he tetched me on the arm, and he asked for brandy; and dis is de fust time I eber knowed him to drink dat wicked stuff; an' w'en I sot out de 'canter he took a stiff horn I tells you, now, — dat deep, ef a drop," measuring a half a finger — "an' tossed it off jis' as fas' as Major Favrand could do to save dear life. Dere is sumthin' wrong 'tween him an' Miss Marion, perhaps; an' he wants you to 'spostulate, for he doesn't ask to see her."

"He has never been right in that quarter yet, you know, Sylphy. Don't connect your Miss Marion's name with his or any one's; she does not like it. No! it is for me — for me, the bitter cup is mixed," I thought, as with trembling fingers I drenched my handkerchief with eau de cologne and raised it to my face, snatched my fan, and then, pausing suddenly at the open door, with an impulse I could not understand myself, asked her whether Walter Lavigne, absent since morning, but whom I supposed to be at home ere this, knew of Mr. Vernon's presence in the house.

"Massa Walter's ober at de Refuge place since daylight," was the circuitous reply; "an' nobody knows w'en he gits dar when he gwine to come home again. He does lub dat ole lonesome place onaccountable."

"I shall have it all to myself then," I thought, "whatever it may be. What now has my bitter doom in store for me, what *more?* What has Mr. Vernon to communicate?"

I entered the darkened parlor. Near a window, the sashes of which he had thrown apart as if for air, Mr. Vernon was standing. As I approached him he flung back the shutters also with a sudden, almost convulsive movement, and the glare of sunshine thus let in revealed his face pale and haggard.

"I have a letter for you," he said, fumbling in his breast pocket. "Here it is at last, but for God's sake do not read it now," whispering huskily. "Put it out of sight if you can, for some future moment. This is too precious to be so employed." Then, after hesitating a moment, he added, "I have bad news for you, Miss Harz."

"Captain Wentworth!" I ejaculated feebly, as I obeyed him and mechanically thrust the letter into my reticule as I spoke, and drawing the strings tightly above it, stood rigidly before him.

"No, no! there is no question of him. But how shall I find tongue to tell you the dreadful truth?" and bitter groans burst from his tight-drawn lips,—his heaving breast, across which his arms were closely folded.

"Mr. Vernon, this is terrible; but delay is torture now. Speak—tell me what has happened,—what moves you so? Let me know the very worst!"

"I had one too," he began at last, in hollow accents, as if he had not heard me; "a letter, I mean, *both* written last night, it seems, in his own chamber; for this was no impulse born of fever, but a settled resolve. Poor, poor fellow! He begs me to ask you to break it to his mother very gradually, as you best could do, he thinks, (and I think so too); some love disappointment, no doubt! He wants her to believe it a *sunstroke*, and you, yes, you can see the wisdom of this, and the holiness of such a deception, truthful as you are."

"My God! Mr. Vernon; what am I to understand? Speak! suspense is agony. There is question of Walter Lavigne; what has occurred?"

"Bear it with firmness, then, Miss Harz. Gird up all your strength to bear it;" and he laid his hand firmly on my wrist, and looked me full in the face as he whispered the dreadful truth. "Walter Lavigne has shot himself through the heart at the Refuge."

He told me afterwards that if I too had been shot I could not have fallen more suddenly, more lifelessly to the floor, before his arm could interpose to save me, his hand close upon my wrist; so that I was mercifully spared the dreadful task friendship had assigned to me. It was from another that his mother heard the pious falsehood that Walter had constructed, and learned that her idol had been stricken suddenly to death by the same shaft that slew the children of Niobe.

It was evening when I revived from that swoon which had veiled my senses while the first cruel blow was being inflicted on the bereaved hearts of that doomed household by the hand of friendship, alas! guided by disinterested benevolence!

When I unclosed my eyes, they rested on the face of Doctor Durand bending closely above me; but it was immediately withdrawn, and a few moments later I was aware of Bertie sobbing on the bed beside me, while he stood opposite me, at the foot.

"Is it all true, doctor?" I asked wearily.

"Yes, my dear young lady, unfortunately too true;" and he assumed a menacing attitude and lifted up his voice and hand together.

"Poor Walter has had a *sunstroke*, you know; generally fatal at this season, and is no more. But think of yourself, just now; one thing at a time. Sylphy, that goblet of wine and water. Now take a swallow, there's a good girl," coming near again and patting me on the shoulder. "You are very much needed just now in this afflicted family. Get your strength," then whispering; "and, above all, be silent."

"Oh, doctor, doctor! it is too terrible!" and I pressed my hand to my forehead, as the dark words of Mr. Vernon flashed back on my remembrance "So young, so noble, to perish thus! Oh, righteous God! where sleep thy thunders?"

"By Jove! you are delirious, I believe. *Sunstroke* is a very easy death, remember," shaking his fist wildly, under

my very nose. "*Sunstroke!* Do take notice of the cause of the disaster. Now I forbid you to open your lips again until you get back your senses, except to swallow this wine and water and a crust of bread. I must be obeyed in this chamber; understand that, once for all."

I took the goblet and mutely swallowed some of its contents, as well as I could, along with my bitter, suffocating tears, but eat I could not yet, and the crust was put back in the hands that gave it; but I comprehended him now.

"Be firm," he whispered, "so much depends on you. Bertie must be considered. She is beside you. Be discreet, as well," and he pressed his fingers on his lips.

"My poor, poor Bertie," and I laid my hand lightly on her shivering form. "But Madame Lavigne and Marion, how do they bear it?" I asked in the next minute, starting to my elbow and putting back my hair.

"Badly; they sit like statues. I want you to make them weep. Bertie, the most nervous patient in the house has found her outlet, and is safe in consequence. Madge is in convulsions of grief, but I have no fears for her eventually. You must husband strength now, for this occasion, and help me win these poor stricken women back to life. Even Colonel Lavigne is powerless, paralyzed."

"Is there no one with them? But for my weakness, I would go at once. But I cannot; I cannot yet. Mr. Vernon?"

"Is terribly shaken himself, poor young man! He broke the news to them, and it was a trial that unnerved him later. My wife and daughters are here and will do all they can for the friends they love, but their influence is small. It is in you I place my chief reliance."

"Oh! doctor, I too am unnerved. I can do nothing now. Don't, don't ask me. It is all so terrible — so recent."

"I know — I know; but women like you always rise to the emergency. It is your everyday people — calm usually — who go down into deep water in times like this. Look at Bertie and Madge, — the highstrung children of this house, — how much more natural they are in grief than those meek, mild, commonplace, lovable creatures! Oh, it is positively heart-breaking to see those others!" And he dashed the tears from his eyes with the back of his brown hand, almost disdainfully, and strode away to minister to those more in need of his care than I was.

When he returned later, Bertie was pacing the moonlit gallery without, in her moaning passion of sorrow, and I could ask questions of him in her absence impossible before. In whispering accents he revealed to me that Walter had died alone, at the Refuge, it was supposed at about the hour of noon. His body was still warm when Mr. Vernon returned to his early dinner, and Patrick, who had heard the report of a pistol, had supposed that M. Lavigne was practising, as he often did, at a mark from the gallery, and had made no enquiry concerning it.

He was found, this poor, dear Walter of ours, lying on the chamber floor quite dead, when Vernon went in to announce dinner to him, with a face so placid, and in an attitude so natural that he seemed to be asleep. The principal bleeding had been internal, and there was little outward sign of the manner in which he had met his self-inflicted death, so far a secret from his family.

"But can it remain so, Doctor Durand?" I questioned. "Colonel Lavigne will know."

"Even if he does he will surely have more manliness than to lay such a burden on the women of his house. But the hope is that he will not investigate the matter further in his present paralyzed condition, though he insisted on returning with Vernon to fetch the body."

"The body! Oh, Doctor Durand! and to think what a splendid creature of life he was last night! So young! so beautiful! To be hurled to such a doom!"

"Yes, it was perfectly unaccountable! In all my practice I have met with nothing like this. Rich, beloved, honoured, sane, healthy, — for the last dregs of disease had left his vigorous frame, I know; with no cross on his affections that any one ever heard of, — unless, indeed — but no — you are too good and candid and sensible a girl for that; it was not through you his youth was marred, Miss Harz," bending upon me his keen, interrogating eyes.

"No, no, indeed; oh, discard such a dream of suspicion forever, Doctor Durand, as unworthy of me and of him and of yourself. Oh, would to God his trouble had been only that; how easily it had been cured!"

"Do you know, then, the cause of this suicide?" he asked earnestly. "Answer me, I conjure you!"

"Doctor Durand," I replied, "would you have me give breath to conjectures that might wholly wrong their object?

Of this be sure, I share no confidence of his on such a subject, know absolutely nothing from himself. It would be charitable perhaps to all concerned to try and deem it mania; but one cannot control conviction. How — *how* did his *father* bear it?"

He started slightly as he replied, "Oh, very stolidly. Like a man who had been expecting a blow of some sort for a long time, and was partly paralyzed by the very expectation. Very calmly indeed, since I think of it. But he was always a singular being. You see how little he has regarded Favrand's feelings or even common propriety in his open elation over his son's inheritance, lately. It seems a judgment, almost, — this last stroke." The words were uttered between his set teeth, and with strange asperity.

"He felt more than he betrayed," I was constrained by truth to rejoin, as I recollected that strange outburst of tenderness to which he had given vent on the occasion of his midnight madness. "He was deeply attached to Madame Favrand, I have reason to believe."

"Yes; he had been, in youth, I know; but there was a disappointment in that quarter which reacted in bitterness on his nature, and somewhat unhinged his nerves, I think, to say no more. Of late there has been no true intimacy, though the friendly intercourse was still maintained, for it would have been hard to quarrel in any case, with Celia Favrand, Miss Harz. She was the sweetest woman I have ever known in the whole course of my life, — the most saintly. To tell you the truth, I worshipped the ground she walked on, myself, at one time, when her name was Lavigne; but she never knew it, never; no, I am sure she never knew it!" And the unsentimental man of fifty gulped down some mighty emotion, and again departed to his distant ministry.

Down upon the floor, that night, by the light of the dim night taper, and while Bertie slept peacefully under the influence of the anodyne wherewith Doctor Durand had covered up her grief as with a merciful mantle, for a season, I read that letter, drawn from the little pink and purple reticule, the "fool" of that period, in which I had impulsively enclosed it, written as it was in extremity and beneath the shadows of impending death, and yet by one in the full flush and vigor of unbroken health and manhood. Strange paradox, scarcely more singular than true; darkly suggestive

of a troubled, trembling spirit standing humbly before an offended Maker, on whose august presence it had intruded unbidden, undesired! yet forgiven, Walter, I must earnestly believe, in spite of all sectarians think and preachers say; for God, who infused the quality of honor into the noblest human breast, honor, without which life itself is valueless, cannot be insensible to its high and enthusiastic, even if erroneous teachings, and will pardon even its morbid excesses and promptings on occasion, as man cannot pardon his fellow-man. Yes; forgiven, Walter, if God is just and benevolent, and Christ has pity on mortal offenders, (as we are taught to believe he has, for those for whose sake he lived and died,) and happy, I well believe, at last, in thy final refuge. Yet who shall know, until the end of all?

WALTER LAVIGNE'S LETTER. Marked (Confidential.)

"After deep reflection and many struggles of mind I feel that I am called upon by every law, human and divine, to lay down my life, rather than bear it in dishonor and direct complicity with crime. To disfranchise myself from such stain and companionship, I should, were I to live on, be obliged to lay bare the shame of one dearer to me than my own existence, and openly deprive my family of home and heritage. *Why* I do not make all this plainer, you will comprehend, for not even to your faithful hands must I entirely commit the safety and security of my family; its peace, honor, and good name. These things I have no right to place in the safe keeping of a stranger, whatever clues she may already possess.

"Yet, better than all other strangers, have I loved and trusted you, my recent friend, although you have been mistaken, perhaps, in your course towards me, delicate as were your motives. Could you have placed the truth before me, even as you knew it, and helped me to grapple with its horrors, you would have served me better. I say not this to reproach you, for I thank you — yes, inexpressibly — for all your compassionate efforts to divert my suspicions, and to sustain my fainting energies. Even for the imperfect stratagem of the button *sewn on with new thread*, I thank you. It was well intended, though a failure and a mistake. I needed more than this. I needed sympathy and direct understanding. Two persons holding hands together at the

margin of the sea, can confront the billows and steady each other's steps, one alone falls beneath the advancing wave. I am a weakling, Miriam, and I go down in the fierce flood of circumstance alone, and may God's blessing rest on those whom my death deprives of a heritage of horror! As Curtius died to close a yawning gulf, I die, my Miriam. Remember me, and pray for our meeting in another world, — you and your Wentworth. Read and destroy this scroll.

"Eternally yours, WALTER."

With streaming tears, with agony unspeakable, I read this message from one already in possession of the secrets of eternity, and himself a part of the sublime mystery of another world. For one additional reader only, were the contents of the solemn scroll reserved, — the scroll destroyed in substance as soon as read and committed to memory, — one whose name linked with my own, appeared in its concluding sentence; now perhaps like him who had crossed the bourne of death, lost to me forever, yet none the less a portion of my own being. One thing was certain. It was in no fierce fever of delirium, no extasy of intoxication, even, that Walter Lavigne had taken his own life; but as a measure of morbid and romantic honor, deliberately planned, so that the dark secret of his father's crime might be preserved and its consequences annulled. Death and poverty were in the balance with prosperity and crime, and he preferred the first. Curtius, with whom he had placed himself in parallel, never went more deliberately to his death-doom.

It was midnight when, beneath the rays of the full yellow moon, the corpse lying on a stretcher, in its serene beauty, was brought to Beauseincourt, by men bearing it on with muffled, steady steps, from the wagon whence it had been lifted at the garden gate. These were preceded by Colonel Lavigne and Vernon, riding slow, with downcast heads. A sadder sight than this my eyes have never beheld as they gazed down from the upper gallery, straining and full of tears, nor have my ears ever heard sounds more fearful and full of woe than the wild scream of the hitherto stony mother when her broken idol was returned to her. There was a Grecian painter who dropped a veil over the face of the father about to sacrifice his child, and so, through the sympathies of men, immortalized his picture. Let me imitate

here, that wise and delicate example, and cast the mantle of silence over the grief of the bereaved.

But the end was not yet. There was still another phase of sorrow to be encountered, dealt with, and put aside, before peace and composure could be restored to the inhabitants of Beauseincourt — the curse removed.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE funeral was over. The earth had closed inexorably over that perfect form in the exuberance of its manly grace and beanty and fulness of young exultant life, and the debt of honor was paid. So deemed the dead.

In that climate and at that season the fearful exigencies of nature made it essential to hurry this proceeding, regardless of feeling or of ceremony, and Walter was laid at rest on the day following that of his suicide.

Favrand and Vernon, bareheaded, in the fierce morning sun, supported to the grave the tearless and impassible man, aged a cycle in one week, it seemed to me, who threw the first clod of earth on the coffin of him he had so idolized, as mechanically as an automaton could have done, and then walked away unsustained, yet staggering in his gait as he went. When again the hand of friendship would have guided him on his way, he stopped and with waving hands and mute, moving lips, made pantomimic prayer to be left to himself, and the straining eye of agony followed his tall, gaunt form, with its bowed, hatless head, and wild, unkempt, tawny hair, as he turned an angle of the house, groping his way as he went, like a blind man.

He had gone to his library, it was thought, from the direction he had taken; gone to immure himself for a time and regain his composure, after his old custom when excited or distressed, for he was one to whom solitude was ever the best medicine; but when at evening Jura went to him with refreshments, the door though closed, was found to be un-

locked, and its tenant had departed, whither, we could only conjecture for a season.

Night came, and when Madame Lavigne sent urgent entreaty for him to come to her, — he, who alone, could be said to bear an equal share with herself in this bereavement, the messenger was obliged to acknowledge that he was not to be found beneath the roof of Beauseincourt.

He had gone forth into the grounds, it was supposed at first, for a while, to give vent unheard, unseen, to his passion of grief; but after hours of anxious search, this delusion was abandoned. He was not at Bellevue, he was not at the Refuge, — this much was ascertained before midnight. His hat and cane were lying on the porch as he had left them when he went to the funeral; no sign of habitation was in the well-ordered library, or of passionate disturbance. It was as still as a sepulchre.

It came to be understood that he had never entered the house at all, but, proceeding on in the direction of the high road, had set forth on his journey alone, just as we saw him groping and staggering around the angle of his dwelling, unconscious, probably, of place or purpose.

At daylight, a party of gentlemen set out in search of him, returning at noon without having found the slightest trace of his flight, — not even a footstep or a broken branch to track it by.

After refreshment and consultation they set forth again. All Lesdernier was alive by this time, to scour the country closely for thirty miles around, in the face of the scorching heat and the fevers brooding in such an atmosphere. The day was one of arid agony almost; the sky was brassy in its blazing glare, as for days it had been, and the effects of this continued drought were telling fast on tree and shrub, on man and beast. The figs were shrivelling on the trees, the half-ripe grapes drying to raisins on their stems; flowers drooped and shrivelled, leaves lay flaccid against their supporting branches; all nature seemed asleep, and yet athirst. But no complaint, no remark even, about this state of things, was made by any of those interested in this pursuit. The fire and energy of Southern men come out on such emergencies, and indolence and self-indulgence are put aside for the time being, whenever their passions or emotions are aroused, they have strange reserves of power. Mr. de Bonville and Mr. Duganne even, who had

seemed to me types of their peculiar class in every way, were imbued with dignity and energy by the earnestness of their purpose. An old man was in peril, perhaps, and women were in affliction for his sake, and comfort, safety, life itself were as nothing in the balance, while such motives weighed. Southern chivalry was aroused as well as manly compassion, and the two together are apt to prove invincible in any cause. So seems it to me.

I remember the peculiar nature of my own sensations when at twilight King and Jura came back with the double leash of blood-hounds that had been employed as a last resource, whereby to track Colonel Lavigne. What had they feared then, what suspected? The scent had been foiled by running water, thus far had they traced the desolate old man. Instinct was at fault, and sagacity was what they needed now, and the men had returned for Ossian, who combined both almost to the limits of reason.

They gave him a glove of Colonel Lavigne's, one of a pair of gauntlets he had worn habitually; and, accompanied by the intelligent brute, set out again to renew the so far unavailing search. The blood-hounds, which belonged to Mr. de Bonville, were chained in the court below, and this time ignominiously left behind; a slight which they seemed to resent by their restlessness and occasional deep-mouthed baying.

This incident gave a grim reality to the danger of Colonel Lavigne, which his mere disappearance had not before seemed to me to warrant. I had indeed believed from the first, and later, from the route he had been traced on, that his aim was to reach the Savannah stage at the fork of the high road, but this fact could not of course be so speedily ascertained.

"He has gone in his half crazed despair," I thought, "to meet Maginnis, and to compromise with him on his own frightful terms, before all hope is over, and his ruin completely revealed."

I did this murderer injustice on this occasion. One crime does not compass all, as general thinkers believe. A man may take your money, yet shrink from shedding your heart's blood, and *vice versa*.

For a time the agonizing sense of Walter's death was merged in this fresh excitement, this deep anxiety, as far, at least, as his family were concerned. My own interest

for Colonel Lavigne's safety was wholly on this account, and pity for the individual was buried under the mountain consciousness of his crimes that cried to Heaven for vengeance, and which began only with the slaughter of Marcelline.

Tears had at last flowed freely from the eyes of Madame Lavigne and Marion, and Madge was composed and sobered by this fresh affliction. It was Bertie now who was completely unstrung. She alone of all the family except her father and the little girls had been able to walk to the grave of Walter, and hers was the straining eye of agony that I had seen following his uncertain steps as he groped his way around the angle of the building, on his way as we then thought to the seclusion of his library, whither none dared follow him. Since his disappearance she had lain moaning, shivering and weeping on her bed again, save when she lost her consciousness at times in unrefreshing sleep, such as comes to all feeble creatures from exhaustion and reaction. Her mood was very terrible to me, nor had I been able to soothe or influence her in any way since the hopeless night came down and found her father still an alien from his home.

The sun had dropped to rest like a brazen ball that evening, surrounded by dark purple clouds, and the moon rose up wan and watery, wearing a mantle of mist. Far down against the horizon stretched a black, shapeless waste, as it seemed, of darkness, and through this shadowy mass ran glimmerings of sheet lightning, now and then relieved by arrowy darts of electric flame. As the night wore on low growls of thunder, as from some beast in ambush, filled the air, and foreboded the coming tempest. By midnight the storm was upon us in all its fury. This first roused Bertie.

As a pealing burst of thunder, such as might have heralded the advance of Titans in heaven's courts, shook the house to its foundations, she sat up in her bed and looked wildly around, with her hands to her head, as if shocked back to life and consciousness rather than revived to them.

I was watching beside her, as my own inclinations led me, and as Doctor Durand had entreated me to do, after my interview with Madame Lavigne and Marion. It was Bertie's turn now to be the chief object of his and my solicitude.

"He is out in the rain," she said, as she was aroused to

her situation; "dying, perhaps, or dead. I must go to him, Miss Harz, I must indeed." And she made an effort to leave the bed. "It is simply my duty, you know."

"No, Bertie; you cannot possibly go through this dreadful tempest;" and I held her gently but firmly in her place. "The very dogs are hiding from the wind and rain, and the crashing thunder. It seems, indeed, as if the deluge were about to be loosened again over the earth. It is the storm of storms!"

"The dogs — yes — they are baying though, for all. And listen to that distant howl! It is Ossian! He has found him." And she sank back on her pillow and covered her face, shuddering silently. "Found him! Oh, my God! and how? I see him, yes, I see him lying among the minorca lilies, *all alone!*" she murmured after a time. "His feet are in the water, and the shadow of the cypress tree is over him — the long black shadow; yet I see him as clearly as if the broad moonlight were all about him. Father! father! I knew you could not survive Walter. You could not honourably, you know; you, a proud Huguenot gentleman! Oh, no — no — no!"

Like one in a dreadful dream these words were uttered, — like one in a dream I listened, — seized, frozen, bewildered. I heard repeated snatches of my own vision, and just as I had witnessed it, — just as I had related it to Walter, it recurred to my own mind, with all the vividness of reality. Yes, he would be found dead in the swamp of Lesdernier. I never doubted it from that moment, and again the solemn vision-warning that I had dreamed swept before me in its panoramic power of prophecy.

"The scene is a strange one to my eyes," she went on, stretching her arms to heaven, "but with God's help I will find it. Come Ossian, let us go. You saved him once, brave dog! you shall find him now, and I will be the first to touch his corpse, cold — cold among the lilies. Oh, my God! he was my idol once, Miss Harz; and you know how we all cling to the last to our broken idols, even to the merest pieces. A noble gentleman, you know, possessed by — *a fiend!*"

Almost the very words that he himself had uttered, speaking of his own condition that night, on the moonlit gallery below!

"Give me some wine, Miss Harz. I must be strong, for

I have work to do. There, that on the toilet will answer; that crust, too. I must eat and drink now, as David did, you remember, the child being dead, just to get strength again.

"How refreshing it is! How good is food in its season! I am very tired, you see, after that fierce struggle;" and she ate almost voraciously.

"Poor child! poor child!" I could but murmur.

"Don't call me tender names; they unnerve me. And don't persuade me not to go. I will wait until the storm slackens, as you say; and then no chains can hold me; no, nor tears, nor entreaties, either. So don't tell mother and Marion, nor set Doctor Durand to croaking at me — the dear, old doleful frog." Then after a long pause which I had hoped to be slumber, "where is Gregory?" came forth presently in clear, sharp tones.

"Ill, up stairs, I believe. He has not been out to-day."

"He is the best rider and has the cunning of a fox, or a snake; so send him word to stop shamming and make ready to go with me on Eblis. He will mind what *you* say; besides he is the only one that can govern that horse, and I will take Tartar myself; that is, if he is fresh enough; and Ossian shall point the way. I have faith in *that* dog."

"But you do not like Mr. Gregory, it seems, Bertie," I said, willing to divert her mind in any way I could, from the engrossing subject that had possession of it, "and yet you choose for your escort this unwelcome brother that is to be."

"Brother, brother!" she repeated slowly. "Ah, that remains to be seen," she murmured, turning her head aside, then adding after a pause, in a whisper, "Walter would have been of age to-morrow, only think!"

I saw the relevance of the remarks, and for the first time, the truth of her insight flashed upon me. Gregory would never marry Madge under her changed circumstances, I felt, unless compelled; an alternative not to be thought of. Was it matter of sorrow or rejoicing? This conviction seized me then instantaneously to depart no more.

"But Vernon and Miriam will now come together again," she pursued, as if in continuance of my reflections. "He has behaved so nobly to us in our trial! He broke the dreadful news to mother, Miss Harz, so mercifully, I could have fallen down and kissed his feet, he seemed so holy in

his ministry. He is no mammon-worshipper, no time-server. It was Walter's wealth and ours that held him back, I believe, though Marion could not understand this as a reason as I could do — as you have always done. Now he will come forward, and they will be happy yet; that is some comfort amid all this misery."

"You are probably right, Bertie, in both instances," I rejoined. "Poor Madge! happy Marion!"

"Happy, happy Madge! rather. Oh, Miss Harz, Walter never liked that man, and *he* had the instincts of an angel, that was why God slew him with a sunbeam, I suppose. Our holy martyr!" The smile upon her face was something rare as she spoke. "But what a terrible lesson it was! It was like David's spilling the water out of the helmet, at the gates of Babylon, wasn't it? He could not drink it, you know, because there was blood in the draught, or the price of blood, which is all the same. But that is a subject which can never be discussed. You can't understand me, that is one comfort; but oh, if you could, if you *could!*"

She lay with her hands clasped over her small, childish breast, — heaving convulsively now, — her seraphic eyes turned to heaven, her lips moving as if in prayer. It was the charm of this creature that she had no self-consciousness. She was like a bird on a tree, or a panther in the desert, or a deer in the wild, in this respect; every movement, every sound, was unconstrained and natural, and volition was her only being.

"There *is* such a thing as atonement, you know, Miss Harz, and what more can a man do than give up his own life? The Bible says this, the grand old Bible, you remember? We have made our holocaust, you see; we — Lavignes — and our ransom is perfect, — paid! A sunstroke or a stroke of lightning seems so *direct* from God, that I cannot doubt he slew Walter with his own hand, because he loved him too much to let him, — yes, to *let him* take the wages of crime," she added in a low, faltering voice, "and now father too, is gone, and the cloud is lifted from Beauseincourt. Poverty, sorrow, shame even, what are these to guilt?"

"You talk wildly, Bertie."

"Perhaps so; but bear with me. I have suffered very much of late, almost as much as you have done since Went-

worth proved false! You see I have penetrated your secret, but I have pitied you as greatly as I have pitied myself, and never breathed it save to God in my prayers. No one else suspects it, except Gregory perhaps; *he* finds out everything in his serpent guile. But oh! I could not have believed it, but for your own whispers in your sleep."

"Then my sleep belied me, for I have never believed this, Bertie. What could I have said to mislead you so widely?" As I spoke these words with apparent calmness my heart beat piteously; for, resolved as I was in my waking hours to confide in his honour, my dreams, I knew, had spoken a different language.

"Oh, not *much*; just enough to account for your changed face and manner, which every one else attributed to the summer heat; just enough to set my brain and sympathies to work to decipher a mystery."

"You are mistaken, Bertie, I assure you. Think no more of it. I am going to New York in a few days to meet Captain Wentworth, because he cannot come to me. Whether we shall be married or not I will then decide; there are obstacles, but not of his creating; and whether or not they will be surmounted remains to be seen. Do not do *him* the injustice to suppose him fickle. He is truth itself."

She pressed my hand firmly for a reply, and creeping close to me rested her head on my bosom, and laid quietly for a time, thinking earnestly, as her speaking face betrayed, but as one abstracted from the present.

"I have foreseen our trouble for months," she said quietly, at last. "I could not shut away this presentiment, strive as I might. *What* was to happen I did not foreshadow, but I knew that the bolt was soon to fall, and I told you so; and see! it has fallen at last. When I returned from the Wells and found all rejoicing in our new-found prosperity, making merry, as it seemed to me, over that poor wretch in her grave, and her angel mother in hers, I said to myself, "this is a cruel carnival, unworthy of Christian souls or a Christian household, and our fairy palace is built on a quicksand, and the waves will wash it away, for 'there's something rotten in Denmark.' You see *he* knew everything; that old parrot of yours." Smiling faintly.

"Bertie, Bertie, you must not use such expressions in such associations; you wrong yourself, your family, your good name, even. Learn to be reticent."

"Frogs live a hundred years in a rock, and when it is riven, leap out, quite alive at last," she rejoined. "So will this secret of mine keep perhaps, if shut up. I never was made for concealment, though. It is difficult to me."

"Then all the more merit will you have for practising it. It behooves you to be discreet, Bertie, even with me."

"Who know so much," she said, rising suddenly and clasping her hands together. "We are like Pyramus and Thisbe, in the play; we peep at each other through a wall, but there is a lion beyond. We must never throw down that barrier, or we shall be devoured, one or both."

"Bertie, lie down again, and rest. You have need of it. Sleep if you can."

"Is sleep a slave of yours, that you compel it? Set me the example, then. Come, put your head on the pillow beside me, your arm over me, and I will try to sleep, and be strong again by the time the rain is over. What a blinding flash that was! and our poor old Ajax out in the storm defying it! God rest his guilty soul!"

Strange words, wild language for a child like that! matured only in feeling and intellect, — made old by sorrow!

She slept, and when hours had passed I too sank into one of those profound slumbers that after great exhaustion, with me simulate death itself, so that when my companion rose and went her way I was unconscious of all that passed around. But Sylphy told me at sunrise, when I first unclosed my eyes, that Bertie and Mr. Gregory had gone out by starlight, "afore de crack ob day wid Ossian, who had broken away from King and come home at midnight, all by his lone se'f, she riding gray Tartar and he black Eblis, an' bofe as pale as death, gone out to hunt for massa, an, he all de time safe an' soun', I does belebe in my heart, Miss Miriam, at some ob de fur off nabor's houses." To which suggestion I made no reply or sign, though for a moment it had its effect, I confess.

While she was aiding me to dress, the garrulous girl ran on in her ordinary vein, partly communicative, partly interrogative, and wholly discursive.

"*Dere's* your pincushion, Miss Miriam. You isn't quite clear in your eyes, dis mornin', dat's certain, feelin' about for pins! If it was a bear it would bite you; an' I done stuck it full of bofe little and big! But trouble will 'fuse a body's brains, bofe white an' black. I 'clare 'fore de Lord,

Jura more like a stone dan I ever seed him, dis day, an' King can't raise a whistle to save life; an' Aunt Felicity looks like she could bite a tenpenny nail in two, do all her front teef *is* out, jis wid trouble! Dey *do* say, Miss Miriam," in a sepulchral whisper, "dat we's all as poor as poverty ag'in, owin' to Massa Walter's bein' sun-killed jis afore his birf-day (what a pity de Lord couldn't have waited), an' dat Bellevue boun' to pass ober all our heads, an' go to dat same man w'at was ole Armand Lavigne's fust wife's own lawful nephew's son, dey tells me. Dey *do* say so, Miss Miriam (an' we gets it straight from Major Favrand's own body servant, Cymon, who heered it wid his own precious ears, from his marster hissef,—here's your long hair pin come to light ag'in, Miss Miriam); dat Maginnis gwine to buy us all at Bosincourt, an' de plantation too; an' dat master'll hab to go to de caliboose, an' dat's de cause ob his suddint disappearance. I'se thinkin' hidin' at Masta Ralph Finestere's, I hasn't a doubt, from dem ossifers, ontell he can draw out money from General Curzon's bank, at Savannah, to pay his debts."

"Sylphy be quiet; you craze me."

"Your har looks jis dat way, Miss Miriam, any way! One long piece hangin' down behind an' de res' mitey careless for a 'tickler lady like you. Well, if I *has* to be sold I wants Captain Wentworf to buy me, I does; an' to live in de Norf wid you, tho' dey *do* say it's a mitey mean place for darkies, on 'count ob de Irish Yankees, wat 'lows dem no peace ob mind, an' is troublin' 'em night an' day. But you is not dat sort, I knows."

"Sylphy be silent; I command. Go now, and ask your mistress whether I shall come to her, or what I shall do for her, and perhaps it would be as well not to mention Bertie at all."

"I forgot to tell you when I fust come in, Miss Miriam, dat mistress tole me to ax you to step dar as soon as you possibly could slip on your slippers an' wrapper."

"How could you be so careless of a message, Sylphy? She is impatient, no doubt, and with good cause. There, give me my handkerchief; never mind the cologne process, now; and let me go immediately."

"I tells you, Miss Miriam, I *furgot*," said Sylphy, handing me the handkerchief in a leisurely way; and with this universal and unfailing African excuse I was fain to be con-

tent, as was poor stricken Madame Lavigne, who only wanted, after all, the consolation of a friendly face, and to be somewhat reassured, as her own heart fainted within her in her loss of hope.

There are days that may be likened to a gum elastic cord; tense, miserable days, drawn out to an eternity of suffering by the agony of present anxiety, and the diligence of detail with which every movement is measured and counted and elaborated, and stretched; but finally, when the tension is off, flying back again into a bitter brevity of remembrance. All that I recall of that year-like summer day, at this writing, may be comprised in two sentences.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, King, riding hard, brought a note from Bertie, containing four words: "We have found him;" and at nightfall, as before, "the body" was brought home uncoffined. Unconsciously every heart had been prepared for the worst, and the subjugation of suffering had been too perfect to admit of an outburst like that which had greeted the return of the dead Walter.

I had gone to my room ill, after the reception of Bertie's note; for this time the terrible office of executioner of hope had fallen on me; nor could I raise my head again from its pillow during the rest of that dreary day. I was not one of those who saw the corse of Colonel Lavigne with its bandaged eyes, under which lay so fearful a mystery. Those warped and lurid orbs that had so often chilled my blood, were wanting now; but they told me that the lips were fixed into a placid smile, and that the calmness of peace was spread over the whole aspect, as it had rarely been of late, when they composed him to rest in the home-made coffin, hastily knocked together, and closed by daylight, with an expedition which in itself was horrible from its very necessity.

He was found by Ossian, closely followed by Bertie and the negroes, Jura and King, (Mr. Gregory having declined to enter the jungle) in the swamp of "Lesderniers," lying beneath a cypress tree which had been struck by lightning the night before, with his feet tangled among the lilies, recently torn from the lake by the storm, and driven to shore and lodged in great masses among the cypress roots that projected out into the edge of the waters. He must have died during the night, either from exposure, or the effects of the lightning that destroyed the tree, though no trace of

this last could be found upon his person; and to complete the horror of the picture, and the strange retribution that pursued him, vultures had plucked out his eyes from their sockets — eyes so clear and beautiful in their natural expression, so steadfast and straightforward at some seasons, so warped and wild at others. These are terrible and revolting details, but in order to give any idea of the horrors that surrounded me at that period of tribulation, they must be given frankly.

Long afterwards Bertie told me that she dimly remembered having had a revelation, though where or when she had forgotten, of the scene and circumstances of her father's death, either in sleeping or waking, and it is to this day a matter of doubt to me, whether the unconscious action of my mind on hers in her nervous condition had not occasioned this vision, which seemed to me at the time, merely a wondrous confirmation of my own clairvoyant dream; a coincidental revelation.

These things are mysteries. How shall they be explained, or when determined? The answer is with God.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MR. GREGORY came not often to Beauseincourt during their first dark days of bereavement, and Madge was not upheld as was Marion, by the strong hand of a lover, for the devotion of Vernon was undoubted now, and his affection had burst forth involuntarily while its object was weighed down by sorrow.

Few words had sufficed to set all right between those congenial hearts, and it was already understood that in the fulness of time they would be united forever, who had so nearly been divided by timidity and pride on one side, and mistrust on the other. Vernon was true as steel, but Gregory was wanting in the right ring of the metal. Still Madge forbore and confided, suffered and complained not.

There was no lack of attention and devotion to the af-

flicted family, on the part of friends and neighbors; nay, rather too much of both, when it is considered that a visit in that region involved the trouble of providing entertaintainment literally for man and beast, and a long day's session, and often a night's lodging beside, when the visitor came from a distance.

Madame Lavigne and her daughters were not equal to detail of this kind, and what I could do to save them I did, forgetting perhaps too much my own necessities of mind and body both, so that at the very time of the sailing of the packet on which I had meant to go, I was lying ill in my chamber at Beauseincourt. My last effort of strength was to write a few lines to Captain Wentworth, informing him of my frustrated intention, (to be put in effect, however, as soon as possible), and of the deaths of Colonel Lavigne and his son. This letter Jura himself carried to the office at Mauriceville, so that I was tolerably *sure* it would be mailed at least, and in all probability sooner or later reach its destination. Then after the fashion of sickness in the South, I collapsed suddenly, and was lost to the world for a few days, of fever, stupor, and delirium, after which I began very slowly to revive again. Madge and Bertie were my nurses during this brief, but severe illness, and efficient ones they proved in conjunction with Aunt Felicitè and Doctor Durand.

"You are looking very ill yourself, Madge," I said one day in my early convalescence, as I sat gazing on the sad sweet young face, rising from the black gingham dress with its frill of *crêpe*, like a flower from an earthen vase. "You have been shut up too much with me. You must go out more and throw off all such care from this moment. I shall get on admirably with Sylphy."

"No, it is not that, Miss Harz," said Madge, mournfully. "I have been wanting to tell you all about it; no one else knows a word yet, but the truth is I am miserable. Mr. Gregory sailed for Europe a week ago, and the night before he left Lesderneir he came to Beauseincourt, and we had a misunderstanding, and — and — the end of it was, we broke off our engagement, and I fear I was to blame." Here Madge shed a few penitential tears.

"How was it, dear Madge! tell me everything. I am quite strong now, and so anxious about this matter! To say the truth, I had feared" — I hesitated.

"Yes, I know," drying her eyes; "because he did not come, you thought as all the rest did; and I was irritated on account of these suspicions myself, though I never shared them, and was cross and reproached him, and his proud spirit took fire, and there was a rupture never to be healed, I fear. But how could I know he had been ill — too ill to write and explain the cause of his absence, or that he was so proud and unforgiving? I am sure I never suspected him of such dispositions before."

"Proud! he proud!" I could not forbear saying. "Unforgiving enough, I grant you, as most mean people are."

"Oh! Miss Harz; you were *always so* severe on Mr. Gregory."

"Because I know him so well, my dear," I said dryly, in response. And he has sailed to Europe, you say; on what account? Sudden business, I suppose."

"No, no; just because I treated him so ill, he thought — here is his note," and out of her dress pocket she drew a crumpled billet, often read, as it was plain, and stained with tears, not shed by his eyes of course, I knew at once, capable as he was on occasions, of playing crocodile.

"Now read it, dear Miss Harz, and advise me what to do. You see how wretched I have made him as well as myself. It is dreadful;" and again her tears flowed freely. "And I know not where to turn."

Had I been alone I should have indulged in a sarcastic, if not merry laugh, over this Gregorian epistle, but as it was, I was bound to solemnity in that sacred presence of confiding, earnest, loving maidenhood. But nothing would have delighted me more than to have been permitted to place my pen in rest in the service of Madge, and to have replied to this hypocritical and cruel composition, sentence by sentence, analyzing it as I went, with the detailed coolness of a surgeon, scalpel in hand. I cannot give it now with sufficient accuracy to venture to transcribe it to these pages, but I remember well the art with which he managed to throw his own faithlessness into the form of offended dignity, and to make his cool desertion seem a despairing abandonment of a hopeless suit and a relinquishment of claims on one who had ceased to appreciate or love him. In short, he feigned a headlong flight, desperate and unpremeditated, to a foreign country, in quest of peace and oblivion, since the woman he adored had covered him with reproaches

meant only to conceal her own turpitude, (for he could no longer doubt the truth of that report which consigned her to another — and turned the light of her countenance away from him forever!

"Who can he refer to, Miss Harz?" Madge asked with grave simplicity, as I sat, letter in hand, after reading it twice over, looking on the floor, and considering profoundly how best this wretched charlatan could be completely unmasked without too severely crushing her own feelings.

"Who can he be jealous of? Surely not Mr. Duganne, or Rupert Huger, or Vernon, or Edgar Finistere? I can't think of any others to save my life," with her hand on her brow.

"He is not *jealous* at all, Madge," I rejoined resolutely. "He is merely a very false and cruel man seeking to dissemble. If it kills you cast him off, and never think of him again, mean, mammon-worshipper that he is. Let him go, Madge, forever."

"Oh, Miss Harz, do you — *do you* think it is that?" and again she wept and trembled.

"First the knife and then the cautery," I thought. It is time that wound was seared, if it can't be healed otherwise;" but I was silent until her urgency, by the repetition of her question roused me to reply.

"Yes, my dear; to be candid with you, I *do* think it was *that* and nothing else that drove Mr. Gregory from Lesderneir, and the sooner you forget him the better."

"Miss Harz, do you know what your words are doing? They are killing me;" and she covered her face with her hands, and I, leaning back in my deep chair, was fain to do likewise, tearfully. Convulsive sobs shook her slender frame.

"Yes, you can weep with me," she said at last, passionately, revealing her face once more; "but you never can understand how I have suffered, never — never."

"Why not, Madge? Do you think me deficient in imagination or sensibility?"

"Imagination at a time like this!" she said, with flashing eyes. "What mockery! It is experience, sympathy you lack; with all your worldly wisdom, you are hard and cold."

"Are you quite sure that you would have patience to hear my experience, Margaret Lavigne," I asked, "even if

I were disposed to give it to you in exchange for yours? Do you think at a time like this your sympathies could go forth to another and to the past, for I who speak these words have trodden down serpents in my path as fierce and dangerous as those that infest your own?"

"Tell me about it, Miss Harz, do tell me," she said eagerly, her whole manner changing, and taking my hand in hers. "It may help to sustain me."

As briefly as I could, I then told her of my early attachment to Claude Bainerothe, its progress, its disastrous end, and the anguish I had surmounted in throwing it aside, and him, though proved unworthy. I unveiled, too, in this brief autobiography, much of my early history to her astonished eyes, and begged her in her own way, and at her own time to acquaint her mother, now too deeply stricken to lend ear to such details, with all that I had told her, including my father's name, and my motive for dispensing with it for a season.

That which interested her most, however, was evidently the story of my early misplaced affection, and the cruel deception to which I had so nearly fallen a sacrifice, the consequences of which still brooded above me. But not a word of the barrier which had so suddenly risen like a volcanic island from the deep, between me and Captain Wentworth! No syllable of this fresh agony which I vainly sought to stifle, did I breathe to her eager ear.

My early sufferings were on a par with hers; these she could comprehend and compare with her own experiences, but should the bolt descend from his hand, for whom my affection was as wine unto water, compared with that I laid bare before her, there could be no redress, no recuperation possible. The very idea was madness, and from the necessity of self-defence alone must be dismissed, or grappled with in bodily presence, as we strive to lay hands upon the shadowy apparition of our own midnight vigils and compel it to reality or banish it forever to save our reason.

"But all this sorrow is over now, Miss Harz, with you," said Madge, with a deep-drawn sigh, unconscious of the bitter strife in my bosom, and wiping her sympathetic eyes, "and you are happy again, beloved by a far nobler man. You will too, soon see your dear sister once more, and receive what belongs to you, and triumph over your enemies, but I am bound hand and foot for life."

"Nonsense, Madge; it provokes me to hear you talk so! Did the deceiver leave you no address, no clue to his whereabouts in Europe?"

"No; oh no! He was to sail from Charleston, you saw that in the note, and this is all I know about his movements. But I think he will write to me, and in a different spirit. I feel convinced that you have misjudged him, Miss Harz. There is Vincent Manigould, he too went off in a huff, and Miss Lemoine let him alone, and never noticed his proceedings, and — and — he came back again deeply penitent, and she forgave him, and they will be married." A beautiful hope lit her face at this moment, yet I thought it my duty to say: —

"Let me entreat you, my dear Madge, to build up no such golden dreams on any precedent of nature, and to try, for your own sake, as far as in you lies, to unwind the coils that man or snake — this human serpent — has woven about you. Why, he is not even a white man, Madge." Watching closely the effect of these words.

"Miss Harz! you shock, you amaze me!" She spoke with kindling cheek and flashing eye. "You jest cruelly."

"He is an overseer's son, as I happen to know, as Captain Wentworth himself admitted; and his mother was half Indian, half quadroon, and a slave. His talents are indisputable and there are persons who would think none the less of him for such a blemish; but you Southerners!"

"Oh, the very thought is horrible," she interrupted, averting her face, and closing her eyes, while she lifted her hands as if to put it aside. "One drop of *that* blood would sully an ocean of pedigree! It is like a dead fly in a basin of milk, that spoils the whole. But I am sure you are mistaken. It is Indian blood, if anything," faltering.

"No, Madge; I say it firmly. I heard this in Savannah, from a gentleman at General Curzon's, who knows the truth and is fearless in uttering it (I never repeated it though, until now), a man who had no interest in misrepresenting, even if capable of it. He is a Captain Courtney, and the statement was made publicly. I had meant in time to inform Walter, but you know how it all was; and afterwards I had not the heart to strike the blow. But I foresaw the end of his behaviour, and so did Bertie, from the hour when fortune forsook your house." She bowed her head.

"If I thought this true," she murmured after a pause, "it would be easy to give him up. But no; it is a slander. Many such are propagated when complexion is so peculiar. I will write to Captain Courtney myself if you don't object. I will *compel* the *truth*," indignantly.

"Do so, Madge, if you like. You have my full permission. Conviction struck to my mind at once, I acknowledge. There was a quadroon taint, undeniably," Captain Courtney said, "and his mother and father were never married; but the old man, full of energy, rose from his condition to fill some political post, and were that all, true love perhaps might pass it over."

"Never, never! Miss Harz; better death at the stake than such a marriage — such a blemish for a Southern lady! But, I thank you — thank you — though the information comes so late and carries death with it; and if I could believe it I should feel only shame and regret for having loved him, — not another emotion."

"I cannot see that you are called on to feel either, having been the victim of an infamous deception alone, from first to last. Mr. Gregory should have gone wooing farther North, under the circumstances."

"He tried it, you know, Miss Harz; tried and failed," she said stolidly, glancing at me sharply.

"If you mean that he wanted to marry me, Madge," I rejoined coolly, "you were never more mistaken in your life. Some effort at love-making there was, after the fashion of such men, but nothing serious or profound, believe me, on either part."

"Oh, I never supposed you cared for him."

"Madge, had he behaved differently I might have cared for him just as you did, for there was no obstacle in the beginning such as existed afterwards. He was a bright, agreeable young man when he chose to be, and captivating to some extent, and I was very desolate; but I became convinced that he had a careless if not corrupt nature, very soon after our acquaintance, and it was a source of sorrow to me, to see him, day by day, winding his coils more and more securely about your innocent heart. Tear them off, my dear, resolutely. You will suffer, Madge, in this rupture, but nothing in comparison with what you must have suffered eventually in such a marriage. A day will come when, on bended knees, you will thank your God for hav-

ing preserved you from such a fate; for a permanence of peace and happiness. For I am clairvoyante, Madge, and your life is to be a prosperous one, I judge, after this dark cloud passes which now hangs over Beauseincourt."

"It is very selfish in me, I know, to be so taken up with my own affairs, at a season of general affliction like this; but for some days, this sorrow of mine has seemed the only reality to me, and all else has sunk out of sight. But I will try and be more dutiful," she said, clasping her hands. "You must help me, Miss Harz."

"May God help you, Madge, in your fierce trial, as he alone can. The more you merge yourself in others for a time the happier you will be. I dare say my own illness was in some sort a safety-valve for your feelings; but that is past."

"Yes, when you were so ill as to require constant nursing I was better than I am now. Not that I wish you sick again, believe me, and do not rejoice at your recovery," and she kissed me kindly; "but it was the interest of the occupation, you know. Oh, how flat everything seems to me, how utterly blank!" And the poor child covered her face once more, to hide her streaming eyes.

That I pitied, yearned over her, I need not declare. My task had been a repulsive one, but for her sake, I had performed it, and I believe the truths I had told her about Gregory's origin (learned accidentally as these were) did more to undermine him in her heart and opinion than all his presumptuous perfidy. So potent is the mark of caste, wherever it exists, so stern the barrier that God has set between his races, and which none can pass with impunity.

Just as Madge was washing away those vestiges of tears which women are so anxious to obliterate, when shed for such causes as those which had in her case touched the fountains of grief, the noise of wheels in the court-yard below attracted me to listen, and Madge to inquire of Sylphy, who entered opportunely, whose was this fresh arrival?

The pale cheeks of the poor little yellow girl and her straining eyes were in sad keeping with the dismally-whispered truth, "Maginnis had come, and the Furies were to be let loose at Beauseincourt."

As Sylphy disappeared, a dark and terrible vision swept across my brain with panoramic swiftness, and I was fain to lean back exhausted in my chair, as it possessed my fancy.

I saw the ruined and houseless daughters of Colonel Lavigne, helpless and unprotected, wending their mournful way from the roof that had sheltered them since they saw the light, accompanied by their stricken and perhaps dying mother; for, so far, no sign of reaction had come to lend tone or energy to her nerves, or rouse her to exertion; and such a blow, I felt, must be a finale to her life, or worse perhaps, her reason.

In the background of this dreary picture I beheld the slaves, used to merciful moderation and even over-indulgence, huddling together in the slave-pen, or driven forth to labor in the accustomed field by the lash of the fresh task-master; ill-fed, scantily-clad, and steeped in wretchedness to the lips, as all who belong in any way to such men are sure to be; such men as Malcolm Maginnis and the class of speculators he belonged to, and aliens.

In the complete absorption of my spirit I clasped my hands across my eyes and groaned aloud.

"Miss Harz, I know what you are thinking about. He will foreclose the mortgage; we know all about that now. We found it in letters contained in father's desk. Marion and I read them while seeking for some other information that we never received, — never shall, I suppose, until the day of doom. Marion is out of the question now. Thank God! she is beyond the whirlwind, and Bertie is too young; besides her life is fair before her still. Don't you think I would do in their place for such a sacrifice? There is nothing left for me you know, but sorrow, and if I can avert this trouble from mother and the rest, why, my duty lies plain before me. I might as well marry one man as another now; all are alike to me. I would give my life for my family, why not my happiness? Say, do you think that Maginnis would compromise? And won't you sound him on the subject?"

"Madge, you are insane! Before I would have anything to do with such a matter I would take a torch in my own hand and burn down this dreary old pile this very night, and roast Maginnis in the bonfire!"

And as I spoke I drew her near to me and kissed her balmy face; for she was kneeling beside me now, with her arms about me, earnest — agonized.

"Thank God! I shall have my own roof above my head soon, dear Madge, a shelter, if no more, for every one of

us; and by the sale of some jewels and plate, yours and mine, we can live for a while; and if the worst comes, a once-cherished plan of mine can be revived, and we can keep school in Monfort Hall, and eke out our subsistence at least. Anything is better, believe me, Madge, than a degrading marriage, such as this would be. Maginnis is no gentleman. Let him do his worst. He can but take your earthly goods, from which the tabernacle of your soul is just as separate as the moon from the earth! Rise up, Margaret Lavigne, and gird up your strength for this emergency, and put the past behind you like an ill-fiend. Young, strong, handsome, intelligent, honorable; just as you stand, you are endued with wealth of God's giving, far beyond the gift of gold. Cleave to your womanhood, your independence, your trust in God, and go forth armed for the conflict."

I knew that my words stirred the old heroic strain in her blood, for she stood before me with folded arms and flashing eyes, poised, erect as a statue of Victory, excited, yet calm.

"How proud you are!" she said at last. "How much prouder than any of us! Mere externes have no weight with you; surely you were sent to sustain us in all times of our extremity."

"Would I could think so, Madge; but see, Sylphy is returning." She had left the room immediately after her fearful announcement, and now in piteous agitation had presented herself again to summon Madge to the parlor, whither Marion had already gone.

"Anything to save mother's feelings, Miss Harz, (for I must still call you so, the habit is so strong.) But what shall I say to that wretch?"

"Say? Anything that comes into your head, Madge; you can hardly go amiss. Your attorney is the man to refer him to should he touch upon business affairs, and if there is the least impertinence in his manner, you can very safely turn him over to Major Favrand or Mr. Vernon." Laying to heart this counsel evidently, she reluctantly descended the staircase, and I saw her no more that evening.

Such was the recuperative effect of that night's sleep, that I was able, by making a strong effort, to join the family in the breakfast-room on the following morning, knowing as I did, how welcome would be my presence to the young

girls of the house at a time like that, in the absence of their mother. For still Madame Lavigne clung to the darkness and solitude of her chamber and the indulgence of her grief; and it was thought better to keep her in ignorance of all that might add to this in any way. On these principles her daughters deemed it most fit not to acquaint her with the advent of Maginnis, or even if discovered, of his errand.

On the principle of "Fetish worship," no doubt, which constitutes so important a feature in negro religion, the devil being considered in its rites a much more corruptible power than his master, and given like mortals, to a weakness for bribes and flattery, a superb breakfast was served up by the joint devices of Aunt Felicitè and Jura, for the benefit of Malcolm Maginnis. Knowing how little consideration was given by its present hosts to the table of Beauseincourt, I was really amazed at the fertility of expedient, and the elegance of arrangement that signalized this banquet. It richly deserved this title.

The plate, usually neglected of late, had been cleaned for this occasion, and the decorated china arrayed. The finest damask cloths and napkins had been drawn forth, wherewith to set these off to the best advantage; and fish, fowl, and fruit, — delicate breads of many sorts and sauces of all descriptions, heaped upon the board in bountiful provision, as in former times on occasions of festivity.

"If dat doesn't touch his heart nuffin' will," said Jura mournfully, to Bertie, when she surveyed the magnificent preparations with some surprise and displeasure.

"His heart, indeed!" was the reply; for she understood well the allusion of the ancient servitor. "Who cares to touch *his* heart? that old Scotch pebble! Some oatmeal porridge would have gone nearer to doing that, however. No! starve him out, Jura, if you can, — you know how he loves to eat. Let him see poverty as dire as he wants to make us feel. Give him a haggis!"

We sat down to table, a cold and uncongenial company; though, as if by concert, Mr. Vernon and Major Favrand dropped in to add to the party; the first constrained, the last impertinently disdainful in his treatment of Maginnis, who seemed stolidly disregardful of all proceedings.

At Marion's request I filled her mother's place at the head of the table, and had the satisfaction of pouring out

five cups of strong black tea for the rapacious Scotchman, who thus managed to wash down his enormous repast, preceded by a bowl of coffee.

"*Them* snipe is the first I have seen this season. Did you kill them, Favrand?" he asked familiarly of that supercilious individual, to which inquiry no answer beyond a grim glance was vouchsafed by the "Mars of the establishment," as Gregory had wisely dubbed him. "Let me tell you, though, Jura," he added, as the major-domo obsequiously served him to a second bird, "not to draw them birds next time; it is against all rules of good living. Put them down entrails and all, if you want a connois-*seer* to enjoy them."

"Did I venture to give orders in this house," said Major Favrand, speaking between his set teeth, with a coolness that contradicted his sparkling eyes and his pale, compressed lips, "I should command Jura to throw them out of the window, if ever brought to this table in such a condition; and (you must excuse my frankness) the man who made the suggestion after them. Another cup of coffee, if you please, Miss Harz."

"No offence intended, Major Favrand," was the deprecating rejoinder. "You Southern men are so hasty. What's the use of a blaze in a bramble-bush?"

"Your excuse is accepted," said Major Favrand, with haughty derision, "and your incomprehensible proverb assigned to well-intending ignorance; but your valuable suggestions, while you remain beneath this roof, are respectfully declined on my part, for the future, in the name of Madame Lavigne, whose kinsman and representative I am."

"My stay beneath this roof will depend upon circumstances," said Maginnis, doggedly, "over which you can have no control; it will be determined by others." And he glanced expressively at Marion, who, flushing to the roots of her hair, drew herself up in her chair proudly; a chair over the back of which Vernon flung his arm protectingly, and perhaps defiantly.

"At a time like this," observed Vernon, "strangers are out of place at Beauseincourt, singularly so, and common delicacy should teach this fact to the most obtuse."

"Give me another snipe, Jura," said Maginnis, significantly. "There seems to be a plenty and to spare, dead and alive, of them birds to-day, and it isn't every one that

is calm enough for good appetite. Some of the bread-sauce, man. Did your cook make this, or one of the young ladies? It is the best I have tasted in Ameriky."

"Where you tasted it for the first time, judging from your antecedents. So you like snipe-sauce, do you?" said Favrand, laughing lightly, though his face had contracted and looked small, as Bertie said it always did when he was angered, and was yellow and clear as wax, from the entire concentration of the blood on the vitals. "You shall have enough of it before you leave Beauseincourt, Maginnis. Mark me, according to your insolent application."

"Am I to consider that as a threat, or a mere bit of playfulness, such as you often indulge in with your equals, Favrand?" asked Maginnis, imperturbably.

I confess I was amazed at the pluck he so far exhibited, as well as amused at the effect it was producing.

"Neither," said Major Favrand, looking him full in the eye, "but the promise of a gentleman, which is never broken."

"Oh, ho! you take that ground, do you? A plate of hot rice cakes, King, my boy. Sip, flap these flies away; annoying creatures that they are — the bane of this Southern country. I much prefer the fan on pulleys, though, to a fly-brush;" glancing up at the lofty ceiling, as if to see how one could be fitted there to the best advantage. "But 'revenong a nos moutongs,' as my French friends say, in New Orleans. You take the high ground, do you, of the sacredness of a promise? I am safe in your hands then, from this moment."

"Don't entrust your safety to them under any such delusion," sneered Favrand. "'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,' I assure you, in this instance. Don't mistake me for one of your national posts, and approach me too confidingly, I beg, for the sake of all concerned. To speak plainly, which seems essential in your case, the farther you keep from me, the more entirely out of my hands you are, the better off you will find yourself, Mr. Maginnis."

"You are two to one," said the Scotchman, glancing from Favrand to Vernon and back again, "and I did not come here to quarrel, but to get my own, and my own I will have in spite of you;" and he applied himself to his plate with renewed pertinacity.

"The law will decide that point," rejoined Favrand, bitterly; "but there is one I will take upon myself to settle, when you have consumed your snipe." And, wheeling off, Major Favrand was, or seemed to be, soon lost in the depths of a newspaper which he drew from from his pocket, while the ladies, all except myself, rose from the table, followed by Vernon, and retired simultaneously from the apartment.

I was absolutely afraid to leave the two excited men together, though the hope suggested itself that Maginnis might lie torpid awhile after such a meal, bolted anaconda fashion; and that the rage of Favrand might subside to a more reasonable displeasure, or mere derision, in the interval. Still, for the moment, there was danger of more bloodshed, as if the libation poured to the Furies had not been already sufficient to propitiate and to satisfy them, and I remained to throw the barrier of my presence between these two irrational and absurd foemen.

Looking at the matter from the cool standpoint of reason it was plain that Maginnis ought only to be considered in the light of an importunate creditor, whom it was more politic to conciliate than to irritate; nor was it rational to measure his blunt obtuseness by the standards of chivalry or high breeding. He was not even a pretender to these. He came to consummate a bargain or to claim his loan, and Vernon, I felt, was the proper man to deal with him, on the first account, as the protector of Marion, (a word from whom would suffice;) and Mr. Schermerhorn, of Savannah, Colonel Lavigne's attorney and man of business, on the second. A delay at law was all that could be hoped for, but this was much in the case of this afflicted and helpless family. I was therefore considerably relieved when Sylphy entered to request Mr. Maginnis to join Mr. Vernon alone in the library immediately after the conclusion of his repast.

"Tell him I am coming," said he, pouring out a bumper of claret from the Bohemian glass decanter before him, "and here's your good health, Miss Harz, and a husband to you; and yours, too, Major Favrand, if you choose to accept of it and lend me a helping hand, instead of" feeling in his pocket with one hand for his pistol, probably, but only drawing out his handkerchief, "kicking up a row."

"Sir!" hissed Favrand, from between his set teeth, glaring at the stolid bon vivant, above his newspaper, in a style that probably hastened his departure, and certainly terminated the parley.

Maginnis stumbled out of the room precipitately, and Favrand's face slowly relaxed into its original size and complexion as the clumsy figure of his foe faded from view in the distant gallery. A satirical smile rested upon his lips. He sat for awhile with his hands locked behind his head, leaning back in his chair, gazing after the departing Scot; and then indulged in his favorite channel for surprise or relief of any kind, a long, low whistle.

"For fools rush in where angels fear to tread," he murmured presently.

"He is no fool, Major Favrand; but a sagacious, if vulgar man," I observed.

"Perhaps so; but what does he gain by a visit made under such circumstances? It is a process of law to foreclose a mortgage; why not institute it at once, and leave these poor bereaved women to their solitude and grief, without thrusting his odious presence here at such a time? As to Marion, that is sheer madness, in spite of the old man's desperate folly. You see I have heard about that, Miss Harz, and it was precisely such knowledge which incensed me so against this wretch and his odious familiarity. But Vernon will settle that score of course. As for me, I shall place half of my small savings, or Celia's legacy, rather, in General Curzon's hands, to be used to defeat him, if possible, right or wrong, and use all my credit and influence to induce that honorable and wealthy man to join me in my efforts. With Schermerhorn's assistance, a shrewd New Yorker, who seems to have been born again out of Blackstone, we shall, I trust, succeed, and if possible, he shall never receive one cent, not one."

"But what he lent is legally and morally his own. Major Favrand, I know your punctilious honor."

"Then you know that I abhor an usurer and commission merchant, both in one, almost as much as a negro trader or a Yankee, and deem them all fair game for gentlemen. There now, you have my code of punctiliá. It would give me precisely the same pleasure to put Maginnis to loss and confusion, as to run a fox to cover; and I would use remorselessly, any hound of the law to do it. It is reptiles like him, far more than the army worm, that are the ruin of the Planter. But there comes Vernon, pale as a sheeted ghost. What can be the matter? Has Marion proved faithless at last? Has the Scot triumphed in his love as well as war? Has—"

Further conjecture was interrupted by the low, impressive communication of Vernon to Major Favrand, made loud enough for me to hear it: "All hope of that kind is over now, Favrand; there is no question of mortgage or delay at law. He has a deed of trust, and in ten days will be the master of Beauseincourt."

"Where is the villain? Let me see him about this. I'll break every bone in his skin, the sneaking Scotch scoundrel, to take such a base advantage." And Favrand sprang to his feet, foaming with passion.

"He has gone," said Vernon, detaining him with a powerful hand. "Gone, by my connivance, to save you trouble; to return in ten days, during which every exertion must be used to shield these ladies from suffering. Before the appointed time we must remove them to Bellevue or elsewhere."

"Bellevue! I am only there by courtesy myself now, you know. There is no knowing how soon the incumbent may be down upon us. I have written to him urgently, as men walk up to the cannon's mouth, you know, when there is no escape, to come at once."

"Does Maginnis know of Marion's determination?" I asked.

"Yes; and he knows mine," replied Vernon. "I gave him ten minutes to leave after our colloquy, promising him safe conduct on such conditions alone. The dog! the low-flung blackguard! It is for me to deal with him," he muttered between his teeth, strangely shaken now.

"Better let me go after him and teach him manners, Charlie," said Favrand, breaking from his grasp. "I made him no promise, you know."

"Major Favrand, if you respect me, let him go," urged Vernon. "This is not a matter to be settled with knife or pistol; for Marion's sake, — her womanhood is in question, — and for her father's good name, let the matter stand where it is for the present. The man yielded with evident joy, all claim to Marion, preferring, as is natural to him, the golden alternative, and the compact he made with Colonel Lavigne must be fulfilled to the letter. His advances were enormous and will entirely cut up and consume Beauseincourt and its dependencies. I doubt whether even the plate and linen Madame Lavigne brought with her to her husband can be saved, so stringent and sweeping is

this comprehensive deed of trust, which, without the lifting of a finger, puts Maginnis in almost immediate possession of this property."

"My God, what injustice! Baffled, foiled at every turn by this crafty Scot, who seems such a thick-headed jackass! Would all I have satisfy him?" and Major Favrand with outstretched hands, appealed to Vernon. "If so, let him have it, in God's name. All I would ask in return would be a bed and a boot-jack and a seat at the table Louisa would never turn me out, and we might all be happy or miserable, as it chanced, together."

"No; nor twice as much," replied Vernon, sadly. "This is not to be thought of, however. Let us look the matter in the face and bear it bravely, whatever it may be. I feel assured that Bellevue will be, for a time, placed at the disposal of these houseless ladies; such a request could scarcely be refused by one who receives as his own, theirs and your rightful heritage. This youth is without family, and will, no doubt, be glad to accede to such a reasonable request; and, by midsummer, we can make further arrangements. Write to him again, and at once, Major Favrand, and we may get his answer time enough to anticipate the coming of Maginnis. He is in Savannah, you say?"

"Yes; I heard of him there when I wrote. He has just returned from Europe, and was on his way to his own dreary plantation, somewhere among the black Jack hills of Carolina, when this news suspended his movements, and held him in mid-air, like Mahomet's coffin. I want to have a look at the fellow, anyhow, who is to fill my vacated snail-shell, before I leave it. A man is seldom hard-hearted at one-and-twenty, and this cripple is no more. Mais nous verrons," and he shrugged his shoulders spasmodically. "They say deformed people are necessarily spiteful. I will write to him emphatically to come at once, and there's an end of it."

"Come here, Mr. Vernon," I said softly, as Favrand marched out of the apartment tooth-pick in hand, an instrument which he affected almost as much as the Admiral de Coligny, of Huguenot memory. "Come here and listen. I want to tell you what a nice large house I shall come into possession of on the fifteenth of September next, and how glad I shall be to receive a bridal party beneath its roof." And I related to him as briefly as I could, the circum-

stances under which I had abandoned my heritage for a time, only to make sure of it at my majority. "I have already spoken of this to Madge and Marion," I said. "Bertie knew of it long ago. I shall sail next week for New York, and I want you to follow me with Madame Lavigne and her daughters, as speedily as possible. We shall have a peaceful summer, at least, and you will have time to consider the future."

"But I cannot leave Lesderniers, Miss Harz, until Captain Wentworth returns, or his substitute appears, in case of his resignation. Then I shall go elsewhere cheerfully; and even if Marion and I accept not your hospitality from force of circumstances, I doubt not that the poor afflicted lady above stairs and her little girls will gladly avail themselves of your offer. It would do them good, in any case, to get away from Beauseincourt for a season. So God bless you, for your opportune offer."

CHAPTER XXVII.

I KNEW that whatever of my own history I had communicated to my new friends was implicitly believed, — implicitly, in the very sense in which De Quincy used the word, as a matter of implication, — with such qualities as they knew me to possess, as one reasons from analogy, or judges of the dubious or illegible word in a sentence from the context. They believed in me, therefore they believed my story, strange and almost improbable as it appeared in its discordant homeliness; but there was no one to confirm it either there or elsewhere, to whom reference could be made, or was even proper; and in after years, when the influence of my presence should be withdrawn, or my enemies chose to give them another version, it was just possible, I felt, that portions of it might be discredited.

I was therefore relieved in mind, as well as rejoiced in

more ways than one when an unexpected witness to the truth of much that I had related, stood suddenly before me.

A few evenings after the departure of Maginnis, and while the circle of flame seemed narrowing around the fated family of Beauseincourt (for as yet no letter had come from the heir of Bellevue, whose very name I had never heard or inquired of, so utterly engrossed had I been with other subjects), and no effort had proved availing to raise the sum to pay off the trust mortgage that encumbered the estate, Major Favrand suddenly started up like a spectre in the twilight, as we sat in a half-circle on the gallery, near the library door.

"I have brought with me my young guest, or rather, I am his, I believe," he said, in a half-embarrassed way, as he pointed to the form that paused upon the step, as if uncertain how to proceed, and then suddenly emerged from the shadow, into the full glare of the library lamp. "Marion, Madge, this is your new neighbor, and I may say relative. Miss Harz, allow me to introduce to your notice—"

"George Gaston! can it be?" I cried impulsively; and in another moment the recognition was perfect on both sides."

"You here, Miriam Monfort!" he exclaimed in a joyful, but agitated voice, which retained all of its boyish sweetness. "Oh, this is happiness indeed, — great, unexpected happiness, such as I had almost despaired of attaining again." And he embraced me as my brother might have done had I possessed one, in the presence of all assembled, with affectionate delight.

There was deep silence for a time, born of emotion, between us two, of delicacy and surprise in those surrounding us. Then came rapid explanations, such as seem almost electric when sympathy has been aroused and attention is awake; and in a few moments it was understood that the chosen companion of my childhood and early youth was, through some strange fortune, the successor of Walter Lavigne, and the heir of Bellevue. Major Favrand alone, still in darkness as to my real name and history, stared wildly upon me; but to all the rest, even to Vernon, by desire of Marion, the truth was known, which only needed confirmation like this to establish it beyond a doubt.

"Monfort," he said at last, "what in the deuse does that grand name mean in such connection? Am I asleep or

awake, or is this a drama we are all enacting? Harz was quite good enough for us, and now we are to hear a new cognomen, and be puzzled to death to get used to it. Mr. Gaston and you are just getting up a little melo-drama, or what is it all about? Will nobody explain matters? or will nobody pinch me?"

Then Bertie was deputed to acquaint Major Favrand with all the facts of the case, while I withdrew into the library to have a better view of George Gaston, and to hear from his own lips whatever he knew of my sister and friends, the last his own as well as mine, be it remembered. He had seen nothing of my dear one, but he had heard from Mrs. Stansbury and Laura, that Mr. and Mrs. Claude Bainrothe were in Paris with Mabel and Mrs. Austin. Mr. Gerald Stansbury had met the child and nurse walking in the garden of the Tuilleries; had stopped and spoken with them and inquired for me; and heard in return that they had not the slightest idea of my whereabouts, or whether indeed I still continued to live. The subject was one that agitated the child so visibly that he soon desisted from further inquiry, but he found that Mr. Basil Bainrothe had very industriously circulated the idea of the probability of suicide on my part, which Mr. Gerald Stansbury had, from the first, indignantly refuted.

"No woman with a large, well-shaped head like Miriam's ever committed such an act," he had asserted; "no, nor man either! When the brain is strong the powers of endurance are equally so, and it takes twice as much to kill or upset an intelligent person as a fool any day, even when disease is in question. If Miriam Monfort is dead she died by foul means, and Bainrothe knows about it."

Thus had the passionate old man spoken straight out, fearless of consequences, as he always was when the truth was uppermost; but, of course, such assertion, together with past differences, rendered any intercourse between the parties impossible.

Doctor Pemberton had gone home some months before to resume his profession with renewed ardor and fresh light and experience; and he himself had broken away from college duties, under which his health was sinking, to rusticate for a time on his plantation, of which his majority made him master. It had never occurred to him, in his wildest dreams of fortune, although he knew that he was residuary

legatee to the estate of Armand Lavigne, that he should ever inherit this noble property. He had heard that Colonel Lavigne had a large family, and naturally supposed that there might be several sons to succeed one the other; nor indeed, was he by nature a worshipper of the god called Mammon, so that his mind had dwelt little on the subject with its attendant probabilities.

Ambitious he certainly was, but he was yet too young to know how great an assistant to the attainment of such ends was to be found in money. He craved distinction; his soul panted for the wrestle of mind with mind, in which a voice within him told him he might achieve victory, and that indefinite consciousness of power, so different from self-conceit, which impels all gifted creatures to the exercise of some peculiar energy, the speciality of their being, urged him to the arena.

The law presented to him the fairest outlet for the class of genius he possessed, but he looked beyond this in his youthful aspiration, and hoped still to deserve well of his country, and make his clarion voice heard in her councils.

The old proverb says, "Poet nascitur, orator fit," but I have ever thought that all eloquent lips were touched with fire in the beginning, by the hand of the Creator, and that he who has the power to stir men's souls by the might of spoken words, is, in some sort, a divine prophet or oracle. Of such was this wondrous boy. There are some still living among us who have heard him speak from rostrum or at the bar, to whom all other eloquence has since seemed tame and dull in comparison, and wanting in the quality of inspiration — the true afflatus.

There was a magnetism in his presence, too; his manner, which seldom failed to work a spell upon an audience, and the beauty of his face, singularly boyish as this continued to be, even in the maturity of his manhood, the glory of his deep, dark eye and electric smile, the Grecian purity of his features and complexion, his statuesque head, so grandly placed, and so gracefully relieved by the short, thick curls of chestnut hair that covered it and clustered around his broad and sculptured forehead; all these, in contrast, or perhaps it may be said in conjunction with his slight, delicate, warped figure, poised on a supporting cane in an attitude of singular repose and grace, had their effect no doubt, in establishing a prestige for the brilliant eloquence that succeeded his appearance.

The frailty and imperfection of his physical construction appealed to the hearts of men, almost as forcibly as did his words to their imaginations, and he had that "fatal gift of familiarity," which Mirabeau, the elder, cited as the most fascinating and dangerous quality of his son. Men loved him, high and low, they scarcely knew why, as they never loved each other, with a mixture of tenderness such as they bestow on woman alone, usually, and hero-worship such as they rarely assign to their cotemporaries. His eloquence swept them from their feet, while his sweetness melted them to devotion, and his helplessness, united with undaunted courage, appealed to every sensibility of their natures.

Then they too sympathized with his very faults. "First in the forum, first in the fight, first in the frolic," thus have I heard him characterized. Yet in his nature were no seeds of absolute vice, wild and often reckless as he afterwards proved himself to be when power and wealth had had time to do their work, and ambition itself had palled upon his palate.

But at the time I write of, all this lay in embryo, and I listened to his ardent plans, and watched his kindling eye, his speaking face as a fond sister might have done a brother's, partly in doubt, and partly in confidence.

But few days remained for us of intercourse, but even in this time he renewed piteously and prayerfully, his hopeless suit to me. It was the old, old story. I told him then as I had told no one else, not only of my attachment and engagement to Captain Wentworth, but also of the invisible barrier, like that which met King Roderick at the door of the enchanted tower, and prevented his entrance, which had arisen between us, and which occasioned me such anxiety.

He thought with me that my presence could best overcome this obstacle which had its root only in misapprehension, evidently, or some device of Bainrothe's, and but for my determined refusal to accept his services, would have been my escort on the voyage I contemplated.

His passion for me, long dormant, I knew would soon drop to rest again, or give way to another more successful one, and so much of the fraternal element was blended in this affection, that I felt confident I should never lose it altogether, whatever disappointment my refusal might occasion now.

Indeed, in my greater experience and knowledge of sorrow, I seemed to have outgrown this ardent boy by years, and looked down into his heart with the clear eyes of clairvoyance born of suffering.

"George," I said, "you are rich, and therefore powerful. Establish the beginning of your reign after the fashion of kings of olden time, by some act of clemency that shall signalize you forever. Major Favrand tells me that the property you hold is valued, at tax-gatherer's rates, at half a million, though worth really more. Do you intend to hold it all for your individual use, or restore some of it to its lawful channels?"

"What do you mean, Miriam?" he asked eagerly. "Is it not legally mine? Has not the will been established beyond the power of contest on any part? Major Favrand himself will receive nothing but the right of sojourn at Bellevue occasionally, as my guest. I offered him the place in fee simple, and an income sufficient to sustain it; but he almost roughly declined my heartfelt offer. I feel that I have been repelled even rudely in that quarter. I can do no more."

"Yes, I knew what his sentiments were on that subject," I remarked, "when I spoke to you; but you will remember there was another whose immediate successor you are, cut off from the enjoyment of this estate by some fatality, only three days before the accomplishment of his majority, whose death involved his whole family in sorrow, ruin, and despair!"

"You amaze me, Miriam. I had supposed wealth to be the attendant on the very name of Lavigne. It stands so marked in public estimation; and with a residence and grounds like these, troops of servants, superb accessories, (I remarked chiefly those of the table), I could not suppose any species of privation familiar to this household. But tell me of their necessities."

"No common ones, you will find, George, upon investigation; but as you value the blessing of God and the consciousness of justice, relieve them even at the sacrifice of a third of your estate. This can be done I know, speedily, through their friend, the principal banker of Savannah, General Francis Curzon, or perhaps he can point out to you some way in which by the surrender of the proceeds of one of your rice plantations for a few years, means may be real-

ized to pay off the trust mortgage which hangs above this property, and which must be released, if *ever*, in the short space of ten days. Such respite, only, have they before — beggary."

He sat for a moment wrapped in thought; the pause of consideration, not hesitation.

"It shall be done," he said, "to-day, to-morrow, whenever Major Favrand will go with me to Savannah; and in the meantime, as life is uncertain, I will give him my obligation to such effect. Surely, under the circumstances, they have, as you say, a right to aid from me. Only three days before his majority, did you say, Miriam? What a fatality! and the poor, doting father, dying broken-hearted in the swamp, whither he had strayed alone in the tempest like Lear. The whole thing is a dire tragedy! Yet I never thought, until you suggested it, of offering them any portion of the estate they came so near possessing. But tell me of Walter Lavigne."

And I told him of his bright and buoyant beauty, his resplendent youth, in which all good qualities of the young seemed to be typed; his noble intuitions with regard to the use of means almost within his grasp, and which, but for the bitter whim of his uncle, must have descended at his death, to others of his family; but nothing of his shame, his sorrow, his suicide, did I lay bare to foreign eyes, however swimming they might be in tears of sympathy.

"You are eloquent, Miriam; you describe well," he remarked briefly, when I had ended, dashing away the briny drops which formed his tribute to my earnest words. "I make this bereaved family my charge," and he rose suddenly, standing before me, leaning on his cane, which he always threw slightly behind him when excited, and stretching forth one hand impressively, he added, with his eyes raised on high, in low, firm accents, "so help me, righteous God." Then I knew that the reign of ruin and terror was over at Beauseincourt.

We lost no time in summoning Major Favrand and Mr. Vernon to solemn conclave. Both wept like children when the generous determination of George Gaston was made known to them; and the papers were executed at once that set debt and Maginnis alike at defiance.

As soon as he could speak, Major Favrand burst forth in one of his peculiar eulogies.

"You see, Miss Harz, how little influence a Northern education exerts over a true-born Southron — one to the 'manor born.' I do not wonder at this as Charlie Vernon does, a poor, benighted Yankee, though a clever fellow; for he is a Calhoun man, this splendid lad of ours, and loves the South and its institutions as well as I do myself. I have felt much more reconciled to giving up Bellevue since I found out his politics, for which he is soon going to place a fiery lance in rest. Yes, Gaston, you may fit me up a suite of apartments, and call them mine, since I find out what metal you are made of; and I'll drink your champagne as I never would that of a Northern vagrant. Don't bridle up, Charlie Vernon; there's no use. You're only an exception that proves a rule; and now, boys, love each other as cousins should, for you are worthy to be of the same blood, even though you are not;" and holding out a hand to each he drew them together, and so locking, left them.

"The fine old fellow has gone out to take a good cry, I believe," said Gaston. "Nothing in life does a man so much good in grief or gladness, and it is only cowards who are afraid to acknowledge it. For my part, I would not give the woman's element in me for all man's boasted manhood. There, Vernon, take the paper; he could not stay, it seems; and — and — if I can do anything more for any of you, command me."

"You have done enough, Gaston, more than enough, already, and may God reward you; our thanks you have, of course; you would not have us say much about them, though, I feel that."

"No, no; a rare piece of poetical justice, that is all, Vernon, and so consider it, I beg. All of her suggesting, however," pointing to me with his cane. "I should never have thought of it, I suppose. You see I scarcely realize this fortune yet, through the instrumentality of which I still hope to make many people happy, however, when I get used to the consciousness of possession — as well as to aid in a great cause," I heard him murmur, "which is not dead but sleeping."

And he stood for a time after the fashion of his life, absorbed in thought, and unconscious of all other presence; this youthful partisan, whose life, from that hour, was vowed to the mighty struggle between South and North. The Esau and Jacob of America.

It was beautiful to see with what confiding affection those pure young girls, orphaned and portionless but for him, gathered around George Gaston, after his princely act, whether of justice or generosity, still princely, was made known to them. Their acknowledgments were guarded by good taste and pride, but every act, every glance betrayed their admiration, for of such a nature partook their gratitude. Even Madge came out of her great trouble for his sake, and entertained him with some of the joyous spirit of old days, and Bertie met him with his own weapons, wit and oddity, and delighted him: and Louey and Laura heaped treasures of grapes and figs, pomegranates and flowers upon him from morn till dewy eve, until he was fain to cry grace from their lavishness.

Vernon surveyed him with real but distant respect, and Major Favrand found a channel for his regard by numerous taps on the shoulder and half embraces, and kindly pledges at the board and elsewhere, made in Cognac or Burgundy, as the mood seized him, and only half shared by Gaston. For so far, the wine-cup was a stranger to his lips, and the sweet and serious training of his youth remained in full force with him. Alas! that it should ever have faded!

Madame Lavigne aroused herself from her apathy of grief after hearing of this noble deed of his, to receive and thank George Gaston in her own apartment; an ordeal for both, better past than pending; and once again the sluggish stream of hope began to swell her bosom.

"With my economy and frugal living, for all luxury must henceforth be banished from Beauseincourt on principle; and the stricter government of the negroes, who must be made to earn their own livelihood and ours hereafter, we may still be independent, if not rich, Miriam," said the mistress of the house, talking to me in calm, subdued tones, after this trying interview was over, and in her usual strain of confidence.

"What a nobly beautiful youth he is," she continued, "in spite of his lameness, and the shortness of his stature, so different from *his* lordly, majestic height! Ah, Miriam! my perfect boy was unspotted by the world and is safe with his God; but the blow was bitter, bitter, — and the crowning stroke almost unendurable. My poor, poor broken-hearted husband, what fate was like to thine! I cannot submit to this affliction, *cannot*, strive as I will. I murmur

and rebel eternally. I shall be glad when Mr. Farleigh comes; he may strengthen me perhaps, to bear; but I feel crushed, crushed; and now that all is settled I wish that God would take me to himself."

I knew that it did Madame Lavigne good to talk to me in this way. I felt that her grief needed such an outlet; but even as I listened, I felt assured that many happy days were still before her to whom duteous children and a pleasant home were spared. She was not a woman of that tragic organization to whom grief is a decree for life; nor did she know, might never know, I trusted, the truth with regard to these afflictions, which made them doubly bitter and direct.

To her the crime of Colonel Lavigne, and the suicide of Walter, were sealed pages, and those who feel themselves badly used by fate recover from sorrow far sooner than they who are fain to acknowledge the justice of its retribution.

These last are the hopeless mourners of earth, these felons of adversity, so to speak, who wear the ball and chain for their own acts, or those of others dear to them, who dare not lift up their eyes to heaven and complain, a comfort to the afflicted from the time of Job to our own; but who, bending sorrowful looks upon the earth, may only tremble and endure, not always finding heart for the solemn utterance of submission, "Father, thy will be done!"

For such mourners there is but one sure solace, religion; one refuge, the grave; one hope, eternity.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IT was the last day at Beauseincourt. I had passed the morning in dutiful attendance on Madame Lavigne, the afternoon in packing my trunk, surrounded by my pupils, and as many of the waiting-maids of the establishment as, under any possible pretext, could insinuate themselves into my chamber; and after all these had disappeared, had finished off with a bath, a ten minute's siesta, and a careful if simple toilet for the evening.

For I knew that some of the neighbors were coming in to bid me farewell, and that the great saloon with its well waxed parquet, over which the feet slid as on ice, would be filled on the occasion with quiet, decorous visitors, observant of the solemnities of grief, and not forgetful that three weeks before, they had been there assembled on two several funeral occasions.

Supper was delayed for the arrival of these self-invited guests, many of whom were to remain all night; among others, Doctor Durand and his daughter Alice, bound, like myself, the next day, for Savannah, and who were to take advantage of the going and coming of the Lavigne coach, sent for my express benefit, for the accomplishment of their journey to and fro.

Major Favrand and Mr. Duganne were also to be of their party to the city, the first bound thither on important business, the second as escort to Miss Alice Durand, to whom he was already transferring his attentions, and the early moonlight would, we knew, be the signal for these arrivals. In the interval I sat chatting with George Gaston.

"Tell me of this family of my adoption," he said at last; "characterize them for me, Miriam; I am not quick at character."

"You dreamers seldom are, George."

"Yet I read Claude Bainrothe long before you did, Miriam," he rejoined, with sudden inconsistency. "Acknowledge that!"

"Ay; simply because he broke upon your day-dreams, and your instincts were startled!"

"Strange distinction, yet perhaps correct. I am too much as one who goes forth into a garden in search of a peculiar flower, in a certain spot, and if he finds it not, returns disregardful of all others, empty-handed."

"You mean that if you do not set to work to study out the problem of character, it will never chance upon you."

"Even so"

"But you have eyes in your head, for all, George, like other men, and I have seen them turned frequently upon Marion, and Madge, and Bertie; what do they tell you?"

"That one is beautiful, the second attractive, the third plain perhaps, but remarkable; but they reveal no more. I want to know what qualities these young girls possess; which to make my friend, which my inamorata, which my intellectual target."

"You have placed them in due order, George; but Marion is betrothed, remember. The others are free as air, (that is, I consider them so), though both have had peculiar sorrows, that have tried them as fire tries virgin gold, and they are refined and perfected by the process."

"You interest me at once. What griefs could they have had that Marion has not shared?"

"Some day you will know, perhaps, though certainly not from me, the confidante of both; accidentally however, I must confess, in one case, which makes it an Irish bull, to use the word confidante at all, perhaps, in such relation."

"Yet not less securely in one instance than the other, are you bound to secresy, it seems."

"Oh, yes; the very discovery begets the necessity, of course, as a point of honor. But of this let me assure you, they are heroic girls; pure, noble, maidenly, unworldly, worthy to be the wives of princes, if such could be found in this our model republic, where all are sovereigns, however."

His slight lip curled. "Model maelstrom, rather," he replied, "in which power all tends to the centre! Our Ship of State is steering thither fast."

"Oh, George! this is too much a passion with you; this question of State rights. Is it great, is it patriotic, to dwell upon it so entirely, in your system of politics? Is it wise, even?"

"Is it great, is it patriotic, to love your home, your hearth, your family, better than those of your neighbors. Miriam? You argue against the noblest prerogatives of man when you set up a nation against a province, with its own peculiar laws, habits, associations. Greece was a confederacy, but Athens and Sparta were watchwords to their sons."

"We will not argue about these things, George, on the last evening perhaps, of our earthly commune; although I see what visions have possession of your spirit, to the exclusion of your own happiness, I fear. I was reared in deep respect for the Federal government, you know. My father, as an Englishman, believed in the concentration of power centrally, and considered the British constitution superior to all others, even our own; which was saying too much, perhaps. It would be difficult for me now to embrace new tenets of political faith. I rest content with the

'goods the gods provide.' We have safety for life and property, protection at all points, religious liberty, — what else could we desire?"

"Much, much," he murmured; "but, as you say, Miriam, these discussions are not for women, or for parting occasions, though I will not despair of a speedy re-union with you, dear, self-willed friend, who will not even permit my escort on your journey to Savannah, who will not —"

"No, George," I interrupted, "you must stay here and get better acquainted with your adopted sisters. If I were to take you away now new temptations might beset you, and your return be uncertain, or unimportant, compared to your continued presence, now. There is so much in their lot that you can assuage and ameliorate by your genial companionship. Then Vernon! I want you two to know and love each other, to strike hands for life. He is to marry Marion, you know, some day, and then you will be brothers.'

"Marry Marion! Yes, that is the way, always. The beautiful women of the earth turn to their parallels, and, above all things, rate physical perfection. Beyond all else, I have noted well their horror of the slightest deformity. A man may be ever so commonplace, so that he is straight of limb and tall of stature. Miriam, no man with a leg like that," and he thrust forward his shortened and twisted limb, "ever won the true, disinterested love of woman. Byron, himself, could never do this, you know; for I count that Italian passion worse than nothing, such as he alone engendered."

"Yet I heard a young lady say, not long ago, that intellect was all in all to her in the choice of a husband, and that deformed or crippled, she would prefer its possessor to a handsome simpleton; a young lady who, at the time she made the remark, had a very graceful, tall, and straight-legged beau, since gone to parts unknown. Not very deficient in mind, either."

"She sent him off because he was not deformed; is that the inference I am expected to draw? Pray who was that extraordinary young person, and where can she be found? I want to wear her colors, and break a lance for her sweet sake at the next tournament."

"Her colors are sable, now, George, and her name is Margaret Lavigne. The remark was made with no individ-

ual reference, and I have reason to fear that, though her hand is free, her affections may not be. But this you can ascertain on inquiry."

He laughed his short, sweet, sudden laugh, throwing back his head as he did so, — his old, childish habit when amused, and shaking his brown curls.

"I do believe you are trying to turn match-maker, Miriam; but it will never do! I shall not marry with all my cares and infirmities. I shall make the South my bride, since you will not accept me. I have loved you too well and long to forget you lightly. That love had its root in my childhood, and will go with me to the grave, I fancy."

"They are coming now, George," I said, "just in the nick of time to prevent personalities. I am afraid you were going to scold me."

"Miriam'" and he kissed my hand reproachfully, while Doctor Durand and Major Favrand were hanging their hats in the hall, Southern fashion, and bustling as they only could do in performing this slight ceremonial. They came in empty-handed and bare-headed, and talked as men so disembarrassed can alone converse; eye and gesture equally free and sympathetic with word and feeling; conventionalities of parlor bondage dispensed with and forgotten. How different from the doleful wights I have seen nursing their silken sugar loafs on patient knees, with fingers disabled of all natural grace and usefulness by the pressure of tight kid gloves, and encumbered with a charge, — a cane perhaps, — in addition to the beaver, that riveted both soul and sense.

For, believe me, my gentle friend, whatever may be your attractiveness, the magnet of your fashionable visitor will be the hat he cherishes with such tender care as never to lose sight or grasp of, for one moment of his parlor existence, so that it becomes a type of self-consciousness at last, and monopolizes his being.

There is so much character, too, in hands, setting aside their beauty, and the positive necessity of cleanliness which exposure enjoins, that I wonder how any man wishing to produce an impression as a conversationalist, should discard the use of such auxiliaries. It may be a prejudice of mine, but I believe that the superior elegance of form and grace of motion of the Southern hand, as a general thing, arises from the complete contempt of gloves and the consequent freedom of gesture coincident with impulse.

Now, Doctor Durand had a brown and hairy hand, weather-beaten, nervous, strong; but it possessed the generous width between the thumb and finger, the artist loves, and was the very opposite in all things, of ape formation. As for Major Favrand, his hands, as I have said somewhere else, I believe, were too small and taper to escape the censure of being finical; but to touch the keys of a flute, impel a billiard ball, or direct a pistol or sword accurately, better were never framed nor imagined.

"Have you heard the news, Miss Harz?" said Doctor Durand, after he had settled himself down beside me on the sofa, and wiped his slightly bald forehead with a banner-like cambric handkerchief, in the corner of which Major Favrand had mischievously sketched a conspicuous skull and cross-bones in indelible ink, as "Durand — his mark!"

I could scarcely help smiling as he flourished it, remembering the time when six new ones, just imported from Mauriceville had been ruined in this way, one evening, for the amusement of a circle of idlers, who impertinently unrolled these purchases of the doctor's, which he would not hear of surrendering for such a disfigurement, nor consent to have replaced by the penitent artist.

"*The* news? Why specify, where there is so much, Doctor Durand? You can't think how many strange things have come to pass since you were here. But give us this particular bit of news as a sedative to my curiosity before I communicate one word of mine."

"Well then, the 'President' has gone down at sea, it is supposed, with every soul on board. Is it not terrific? Sail ships were always safest, I am convinced. I have no confidence in ocean steamers. It is absolutely tempting Providence."

There was a pause. Major Favrand was vainly telegraphing behind my chair, I found, on turning my head suddenly, following the direction of Doctor Durand's eyes, distended in amazed interrogatory. Have I not said before that hints were thrown away upon him and signs as well? His acumen was solely medical. I had grown a little pale, I confess, at this announcement, but now I said calmly, —

"'It does not matter, Major Favrand; I am no believer in omens, only in destiny."

"What in the world are you driving at, Favrand?" always some mystery. I hate mysteries, I confess; always

have, though compelled to observe them sometimes in my profession. Can't a man talk of what the papers are teeming with? What nonsense! Is there any one likely to be on that ship that you care about, Miss Harz?"

"No, no; I have no idea of such a thing; but I am going out myself soon, on an ocean steamer. It was *that* Major Favrand was making signals of distress about; he is so superstitious, you know. Don't mind him though, in the least, doctor. I am not disturbed, I assure you."

"You look very pale, though, for all. I'll be hanged if you don't. I never saw such a girl in my life. I can't tell how to take you. One time strung like a Roman cross-bow, another trembling like a mimosa in the swamp. Sometimes I say to myself 'This Miriam Harz would make a good army surgeon's assistant, or an admirable hospital nurse; she has nerves of steel.' And the next moment down she goes in a swoon, like the old man's cow, in the story. Bless my soul, what a strange compound you are! There, sniff your aromatic vinegar. I see I have put my foot in it, and the Lord above knows how I hate myself for having annoyed you unnecessarily, on this your last evening at Beauseincourt. Well, it will teach me a lesson, perhaps; or, at least, so I fervently pray."

"Amen," said Major Favrand, so quaintly, that I found relief in a little nervous laugh, in which the good doctor joined somewhat feebly, I thought, and I was glad to call in a fresh element of discourse in the shape of George Gaston, who now approached for an introduction, at my summons, leaning on his cane.

"The new Lord of Bellevue," said Favrand, lightly.

"George Gaston, Esquire, let me introduce to you Doctor Durand, the best physician in the South," I said in continuance; and there was the usual shaking of hands and gratulation of manner consequent on all Southern introductions.

"Le roi est mort, vive le Roi," added Favrand, wheeling off carelessly.

"I wish he would not say such things, Miriam," complained George, in a low voice, to me alone. "It places me in such a false position. What must these people think of me, powerless to reply in any way. I will not, cannot consent to displace Major Favrand, seeing how he feels. I shall never set foot at Bellevue again, unless he continues

to exercise ownership there; it is too mortifying. It may be shut up else, and Laura and Aunt Stansbury and I can find our home elsewhere."

"Make allowances, George, for the sudden bitterness of this change to Major Favrand. He is very impulsive, very noble, though, at heart. He means you no annoyance, believe me; no inconvenience, even."

"He must be reasonable, then, and consent to be my host during his life, on the occasions of my few and short visits to Bellevue. That is, unless he fixes his home elsewhere at my expense, and through preference."

"This he will do, George; at his own only, however, I know. It is his intention to abide chiefly in Paris; I had this from his own lips. For the present, he will remain here I think, if you urge it; and if he knew how you felt, I am sure he would never repeat his offense to your delicacy. He is not very fond of Bellevue, I think, however. He is blunt, sometimes, I know; a very proud, passionate man, naturally, 'suddenly cut off at the knees,' as he expresses it, 'and disabled from action,' but with great qualities underlying all the frivolities of his outward seeming."

"But he makes me feel so badly, Miriam! I hung my head like a thief just now, when he quoted that absurd old French proverb, applicable to that people of ingrates alone."

"Applicable to most people, George, I assure you; but happily not to those before whom, and for whose benefit it was quoted. Doctor Durand is very disinterested and quite devoted personally to Major, as he was to Madame Favrand. Such friendship is rare and delightful, may you deserve it as well."

"Miriam, I'll tell you what it is! I sha'n't stay much in this neighborhood, unless matters change in their aspect. I don't want to be looked upon as the porcupine occupying the snake's hole, we read of in Æsop's fables. I want my constituents to love me as well as elect me!"

"Always a political dreamer, George. Your Aaron's rod is ambition, I fear, and always in your hand;" and I laid mine lightly on his shoulder. "Come, let us go to supper, and forget in the lap of rice waffles, and the balm of coffee that you are so wretched as to be the wealthiest man of your age in Georgia. Give me your arm, George."

"No; I'll be hanged if you shall. Go to supper on your own hook, Mr. Gaston. I claim to escort Miss Harz to the

table to-night, perhaps for the last time in my life." And there were tears in the doctor's voice as well as in his honest eyes as he drew my hand, reluctantly relinquished by George, under his arm.

"But I will come back again, doctor."

"I don't believe one word of it. Who would that could stay away? And as for me I am bound hand and foot at Lesderniers for life, by the sternest of masters. I shall have the satisfaction of seeing you off, however, which is something, and now and then, when Favrand and Gaston go North, shall send you a message. As to letter-writing, I have forgotten the art, and you will never waste the scrape of a pen on a dreary old country doctor, I know."

"Indeed, you wrong me there. I shall write to you — let me see — yes; the very seventh letter I write after getting home, shall be to you. Shall it be long or short?"

"Oh! as long as a woman's story, by all manner of means; and that you know is immeasurable. But, seriously, I should feel such an attention the greatest compliment."

"Your due, no more; which you won't suffer me to pay in any other way, just now. I consider your medical visits impositions on my share of the declaration of independence, and a reproach to my poverty, under the circumstances, and shall resent this in my own way, some day, doctor."

"You are a spiteful witch, I know; but this subjugation of a strong-minded, magnetic agent, was too good an opportunity to be lost, and I shall continue to hold you thus in bondage as long as I can."

"I cry you grace, doctor," I whispered; "I mean for permission to *hear* the grace which Mr. Fairleigh is about to give us. I had no idea he had arrived," and I ceased as a tall and dignified man, white-haired and marble-browed, rose with uplifted hands to bless, in a few earnest words, the bread we were breaking; truly apostolic-looking, according to our ideas of those early followers of the Nazarene, was the Right Reverend Enoch Farleigh."

"He will be a comfort to Madame Lavigne, I trust," I murmured when he had finished. "I am truly thankful he came at this crisis."

"So you consider your departure a crisis. Conceited puss! You talk as if your stay here had been a continued fever."

"So it has, doctor;" I rejoined gravely.

"To others, not yourself, then. Wentworth and the like. But where is Gregory?"

"Gone, never to return, I trust."

"Would Madge say 'amen' to that, think you?"

"I hope so; for he is unworthy of her. But not a word on the subject now or hereafter. It is a most delicate one. You will bear this in mind, won't you, and make no inquiries. As to Mr. Gaston, I commend him to you, especially; he is noble, gifted, but young and impulsive; and he wants an honest counsellor, and a good wife."

"You are a good friend, that is certain, Miss Harz."

"I am glad you appreciate yourself so highly, doctor, as to praise me for placing my friend under your protection. Yes; I hope I am a good friend as well as a bitter enemy."

"Why, you should love your enemy, you know; if you mind the good book."

"But I don't; I can't. I was never made to do that, in the beginning. I had too much of the blood of Esther in my veins."

"But you would not harm your enemy?"

"I can't tell what I might do if a fair opportunity presented itself. Revenge is sweet. I would commi no crime, of course, on my own account; but if my enemy were hanging on a tree I should not turn out of my way to cut him down; nor would you, doctor, if I know you."

"Monstrous! how dare you utter such heresies? Let us have a cup of this white Burgundy together, for the last time, perhaps; poor Lavigne's tears of exile, you know. Ah, that New Year's dinner!" and he shook his head dolefully. "You remember it? Shall we ever see the like again?"

"Remember it and its bitter consequences? Yes; and trust indeed, never to see its like again, as you must also."

Strange mirage of the brain! As I raised the glass to my lips, and murmured these words, the seat at the foot of the table, always empty since the death of the master, seemed suddenly filled, as does the chair of Banquo in the play, and again I met the glare of those lurid eyes, so dreaded once, and saw the long, lithe, lifted finger raised in menace or in warning, as the phantom vanished. The glass fell from my nerveless fingers, unpledged, and shivered to

atoms on the plate before me as if stricken down by a viewless hand, and for a moment a blind terror, engendered by this delusion, possessed me, soon conquered and put aside, by the force of reason, in all save its results.

"I am nervous," I said. "These parting pledges are trying ordeals, doctor. Let us have no more of them. I am not usually so careless."

"Another plate, Jura; another glass; and now, what will you have, Miss Harz?"

"Nothing — anything. Keep all those eyes off of me or I shall give way. You can't tell how I feel. Heap my plate yourself, and fill my glass, but do not expect me to eat one mouthful. I am choking — a glass of water, that is all I need."

"Strange versatility of mood!" I heard him murmur. "You are a physiological study, Miss Harz," speaking in an under tone. "What shall I compare you to? A charged thunder-cloud in summer, in a sunny sky. A—" Sudden was the impulse of confession.

"Bird with a broken wing, more like," I whispered, "singing out of its agony. But let this pass. Do take wine with Mr. Gaston, he is the stranger here to-night. See, I will join you."

"True, true;" and the "tears of exile" went on their sparkling way to the other end of the table, where the lovely face of Marion rose behind the coffee-urn, near which Vernon and Gaston were doing their best to entertain Madge and her sister. Bertie was of course still in the background; besides, she loved best to play the part of "looker-on in Vienna," one of the greatest enjoyments in life to sagacious observers like herself, not oppressed with self-consciousness, or the fatal wish to shine; but taking the wave as it comes, like a seaside loiterer, who stoops for his shell alone, when the billow brings it tamely to his feet. Her treasure was not yet; but she was one who could patiently bide her time, I felt, and in the meanwhile enjoy to the utmost the goods of others. She would still have her day of triumph, and stoop to raise her pearl, and be loved as she deserved, I well believed.

Thus prophesied my heart, so peculiarly bound up in her welfare and happiness, that I was blinded to the reality of her wayward and eccentric organization as a never-ending source of sorrow and disappointment on her path through

life. I could not then forbode what afterwards befell her, despite the clairvoyance of my affection, and for this and many other spirit utterances of mine while at Beauseincourt, I deserve perhaps to join that class of prophets who, according to Dante, are to walk crabwise through eternity, with averted faces, in penance for having in this life issued false oracles.

Mr. Fairleigh, I found in my brief conversation with him after supper, to be a man of culture and dignity. His serene and noble face spoke of a soul exalted and undisturbed by petty considerations; and I could well conceive how precepts from his lips might comfort and persuade one so confiding, so good, so gentle as Madame Lavigne. He was the instructor of her youth, of whom she had before spoken to me so admiringly, it may be remembered; and he had come now, after the fashion of the good Samaritan, to pour oil into bruised and bleeding wounds. Even Doctor Durand, who had a turn for materialism, and valued ministers as secondary considerations, looked hopefully to the result of Mr. Fairleigh's mission, ineffectual as he had found his own remedies in the case of Madame Lavigne.

The last evening at Beauseincourt was over; the last good night said to tearful and sobbing pupils, gentle friends, kind domestics, and it was late before my weary head had leave to seek its pillow, on which a deep sleep enthralled me for a few hours, almost as profound as the habitual slumber of Bertie, who lay locked in repose beside me.

It was three o'clock in the morning when I awoke refreshed and calm; my repeating watch told me the hour, I remember, in the absence of light; for the taper had gone out, and the closed jalousies shut out the shimmering moonshine; and without further disposition to repose, and following the impulse that had often led me thither at the same hour, I softly unclosed the door of my chamber, and stepped forth with bare feet and in my night-dress on the smooth floor of the gallery on which it gave. It was a broad, low-roofed portico, making a right angle at the junction of the ell and main building, and following the whole course of the rear of the mansion, so as to make its entire length more than a hundred feet. Pillars of wood supported this comparatively recent addition to the house, around which vines were wreathed, but none so vigorous as the superb Augusta rose which had been destroyed by the flames,

and which had in its time sheltered the entire wing from the effects of the burning summer heat.

I had derived great and constant pleasure from the undisturbed possession of this place of promenade during my whole sojourn in the house of the Lavignes. Often when my mind had been distracted with anxious cares, I had literally walked down its excitement and anguish in my fierce and rapid movements to and fro, over its smooth painted floor, the daily care of Sylphy, who might be heard in the hot season busily employed in refreshing it with mop and broom and water, during the first hours of the morning, the pleasant, dewy freshness of which operation might be felt gratefully in the atmosphere of our heated chamber.

The long gallery was very solitary, of course, at an hour like this, and it was with a feeling of calm relief that I paced its lonely length, stopping at intervals to look out upon the night; one of cloudy sultriness, occasionally relieved by gusts of warm, damp wind, that bore the distant odors of swamp and forest on its wings and promised speedy rain. Here and there in the dappled heavens were liquid purple spaces, like the open sea, described by Arctic voyagers, around which hung masses of silvery clouds, projecting like ice cliffs; and into these patches of sky the large yellow moon would now and then sail majestically; suddenly emerging like a ship from a fog, from the fleecy screen that veiled her light, to cross these spaces and plunge into mist and shadow again.

There was something in the whole effect calculated to absorb the mind of an absent dreamer, intent on the future, and for the first time for many weeks, putting aside all foreign considerations in favor of self, too long merged in others and neglected. In the deep quiet of meditation, and in the contemplation of that serene summer heaven, the identity of Beauseincourt was lost, and for a time I forgot in what place I stood and by whom I was surrounded, as entirely as if I had never trod across the gloomy threshold, or known that fated family. Such oblivion was not long to be permitted.

I was startled from my reverie by a sound, familiar once as annoying, but from which my ear had been free for many months; the clear, clanking noise of a chain rattling upon the ground, that seemed to proceed from the court-yard

below, nay, from the cistern itself, partly in light and partly in deep shadow as this was, with its rows of water-jars, arrayed like dusky soldiers in the glimmering gloom. Yet there was no apprehension mixed with the feeling with which I looked down at first upon a scene chiselled out by that severest of sculptors, moonlight. Every branch, every shrub, stood out distinct and clear in that pre-Raphaelite treatment, and the lines of demarkation between one object and another were as sudden and sharp as if cut with trenchant steel, and traced with ice-rime. "What can it be?" I questioned later, as I saw beneath the projecting eaves of the store-house, an object large, dark and shapeless, moving restlessly among the tanks and shadows, and again heard the rattling of that chain, disused since the death of Jumbo. "Some creature has got entangled there," I thought; "a calf, or a deer perhaps; or a fierce watch-dog has broken loose. I will wait and see; it will probably come out into the moonlight before the clouds veil it again, and I must know."

But in spite of words like these, self-spoken words, intended for self-encouragement, there was a weight like lead at my heart, cold, oppressive, unaccountable; and I could not have torn myself away, to have saved my own life, from the scene of fascination, physically or mentally, by any effort; and now I was conscious of another form, a man's, unmistakably, this time, moving cautiously, at the very edge of the shadow, but still within its limits, groping for something, stooping and rising alternately, as it seemed, then standing upright and motionless for a spell, and finally, suddenly emerging into the moonlight.

Gazing with wild, distended eyes, I clung with spasmodic, trembling fingers to the balusters of the gallery, as the ghastly pair, thus horribly defined, staggered forth into the sheeny splendor of the moon, just reeling into shadow again, and stood for a moment, one only, the man with uplifted face, clearly revealed before me.

No; I will not draw down upon my head the contempt or derision of my reader, or again freeze my own blood by any farther attempt at the delineation of this fearful spectacle, which once beheld, can never leave my memory, and from which my mind still recoils as it then recoiled, with horror unspeakable.

Scream after scream resounded in my ears, as if uttered by the voice of another person, as I turned and fled along the silent gallery. I had no thought whither, but instinctively, as it seemed, attaining my own chamber, to fall, terror-stricken and agonized upon my bed, yet clearly conscious of all that had transpired. And still Bertie slept on profoundly, in her state of blessed unconsciousness. "God giveth his beloved sleep," was never more fully illustrated, and even while the cold dew bathed my limbs, and the chilling grasp of death seemed laid upon me, I was thankful for her immunity from such a community of horror.

I think it was Coleridge who said "No man could see a ghost believing it such, and live afterwards." But I am convinced this result would depend not so much on the horror of the sight, as the degree of vitality and strength possessed by the beholder of such a spectacle, if indeed, God suffers such to exist at all. For still there are moments when I doubt the evidence of my own senses, rather than question His justice, "who doeth all things well," nor can it be known until the day of doom whether what my eyes beheld that night was a figment of my own brain or a vision of deepest hell. The screams I had uttered were attributed by those who heard them, and who came forth vainly to investigate their cause, to the terror of some night-bird which had taken shelter in the gallery, to elude its pursuing foe, so wild and inhuman were those wails of mortal agony. From me no solution was required.

That the grasp of death was on me, I felt for a season, and the icy anguish that congealed my frame yielded slowly to the efforts of nature, dragging her young, strong creature slowly back from the precipice of dismay, above which she had been clinging to life, to courage and existence.

Volition was here suspended from first to last.

I have given here this strange experience of my life for what it is worth, truthfully, unreservedly, for the first time since I encountered it; for even yet, to write, to think of it, chills and thrills me to the very centre of my being. I pour it out as we empty bitter dregs from a crystal vase which we design for better uses, and with this libation of horror the reader leaves Beauseincourt forever.

What befell me on my homeward way, what after trials

were mine, what my earlier ones had been, as well as my further adventures, must form the subject of another volume, which will be found contained in the sequel to and final conclusion of "Miriam's Memoirs," just published, under the title of "SEA AND SHORE." Until then, farewell, gentle and patient companions—who have so far accompanied me on my path of destiny.

We part at one of its portals; shall we strike hands again until we reach another?

The answer rests with time.



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